Musha Shugyo

武者修行

Nonhumans

A Legend of the Five Rings RPG 3rd Edition Fanzine

#3

Editorial

Welcome to the third issue of *Musha Shugyo*!

What? Did I hear somebody say "I thought you were dead!"?

Oh well, I hope you will forgive us for the delays. I had believed that our second issue would be our longest issue ever, but I was wrong. This Nonhuman issue is 122 pages long! It contains everything you wanted to know (and probably more) on the popular nonhuman races of Rokugan such as the Naga, the Nezumi, the Shapeshifter Spirits, the Kitsu, the Ningyo, the Kenku and the Zokujin.

In addition to its long delay, this issue is also special for another reason: it's the last one I will lead. I'm stepping down as Editor in Chief for numerous reasons, but suffices to say that my life has been quite busy lately, and I am mostly to blame for the long delays. Rather than hinder *Musha Shugyo* any further with an Editor in Chief that isn't available enough, and to free up more time to spend with my family, I'm passing the proverbial Torch.

Beginning with the next issue, it's founding member and prolific contributor Kalajel (Daniel Vallée) that is taking the reins. I know *Musha Shugyo* will be in good hands, and I plan to continue to contribute some articles here and there.

It was a great experience participating in this team effort to create this fanzine. It's has been my honor to work with all the writers and artists that have contributed to *Musha Shugyo* so far. You all have my sincerest thanks.

And now, go ahead and read MS3. I hope you'll enjoy reading it as much as we enjoyed writing it.

Mikael "Otaku Mike" Brodu,
Editor in Chief

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Table of Contents

The Tea House
Interview with Brian Yoon 4

The Library
The Kenku 7
Society and Psychology 7
History and Myths 7
Relations with Other Races 8
Creating a Kenku Character 10
Kenku PCs 11
The Kitsu 12
Legacy of the Kitsu 13
The Ningyo 14
Beginnings 14
The Hidden Civilization 15
The Sundered 16
Languages 16
Alliances 17
The Ningyo Life Cycle 20
Society & Customs 21
Art & Tools 22
The Soul-Pearls 24
The Taint 24
Koujin 25
Magical Abilities 26
Liquid Magic 26
Curses and Blessings of Chikushudo 26
Ningyo New Spells 27
Locations 28
The Zokujin 30
Life and Society 30
Zokujin beyond Rokugan 31
Religion 31
History 31
The Five Immortals 33
Relations with Other Races 33
Current Goals 36
Zokujin Characters 36
Kjgkt - Zokujin prophet 36
Zokujin Warrior (Bushi) 37

The Dojo
Paths 38
Expanded Skills 38
Advantages & Disadvantages 40
Nonhuman Weapons 42
Kata 46
Human Kata 46
Naga Battle Memories 46
A'Rtch'Kan (Nezumi Tricks) 49
Shapeshifter Kata 50
Spells 52
Kitsu Spiritual Abilities 54
Naga Dojo 55
Naga Past Lives 55
Human Ancestor Professions 58
Nezumi Transcendents 58
Ningyo as Player Characters 62
Fitting in Rokugan 62
Roleplaying a Ningyo Shapeshifter .. 63
Creating a Joningyo Character 63
Story Advantages 65
More Joningyo Advantages and Disadvantages 66
Shapeshifters in your Game 67
Animal Form 67
New Shapeshifter Species 68
Forms and Powers 70
Growing Up Among Humans 70
Transformation 71
Character Advancement 71
Creatures of Rokugan Inconsistencies . 72
Shapeshifters and the Taint 73
Taboo Points for Shapeshifters 73
Nezumi Heritage Tables 76

The Smithy
Musha Shugyo #2 Contest Winners 78
Imperial Cartographer 85

Integrating Nonhumans into a L5R Game 87
The Nonhuman Races of Rokugan ... 88
Nonhumans in Rokugan 90
Playing Nonhuman Characters 92
Nonhuman Characters and the Campaign 97
Some Specific Situations 98
Quick-Starting a Game: Insta-party and CFS 100

The Theater
Down the Rabbit Hole 102
Shard of Crystal 104

The Inn
Challenge, Focus, Strike 108
Racing Tomorrow 108
Favored Child 110
Skin-Deep 111
Vengeance from Beyond the Grave 112
Memories Make the Man (or Woman) 113
Gargoyles 114
The Bandits in the Forest 114

Hanami Mura
The Governor's Aides 115
Jouba Ikke, Hanami Mura's Stables .. 117
Yodosuke's Arrival 119
Downtown Map 121

Post – Scriptum
So, What's Next? 122

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A giant THANK YOU to the contributors who produced enough material to fill two issues worth of Musha Shugyo, again! You guys rock! - Mike Brodu

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Interview with Brian Yoon

For our Third issue of *Musha Shugyo*, Brian Yoon has accepted to answer our questions.

Musha Shugyo: *Hi Brian. Can you introduce yourself to the readers, first the person you are, and then your job title at AEG? What circumstances brought you to your current job at AEG?*

Brian Yoon: Sure! I'm 24 years old and I've been involved in gaming in all its forms for as long as I can remember. I'm a member of the Legend of the Five Rings Story Team and a member of the Legend of the Five Rings RPG Design Team.

I first became involved with AEG in the fall of 2002. I used to chat in the #l5r IRC channel often during those years and got to know the RPG writers of that era (Seth Mason, Rich Wulf and many of the other freelancers). I sent in a sample submission and got a small assignment on Secrets of the Unicorn. They gave me increasingly larger assignments until the release of Third Edition.

When they rounded up the writers for the new edition, they asked me if I wanted to join the team (a no-brainer question). I worked on the new edition from the ground up and helped with its design. When some of the core writers left AEG, I joined the RPG Design Team.

MS: *Is that your full-time job? If not, what is your other job, and how hard is it to juggle between them?*

BY: Currently it's my only job, as I've finished college and am applying to every job within my career choice. Therefore I'm free to spend an inordinate amount of time on AEG products.

MS: *How is it to work for AEG and the other Story Team members, how do you feel about working on L5R?*

BY: It's been amazing. The Story Team members are amazing coworkers and they all love L5R with a passion. It's been quite a wonderful experience, working on the themes and stories together. It's hard work and assignments often stack on top of each other. The busy weeks get pretty hectic that bleed into all-nighters, but it's all worth it to see the excitement in the eyes of fans at conventions worldwide. That might sound a bit silly, but I really do enjoy talking to fans about the game most of all. I think I'll have to make GenCon every year from now on, just to increase the opportunities to do so!

MS: *Can you tell us about a few of your more memorable experiences at conventions, with other pros of the industry, or with the L5R fans?*

BY: I vividly remember a Los Angeles Kotei several years back (I think this might be the end of Diamond or the first year of Lotus). Kristy Mack introduced me as the Third Edition writer and I signed a few of the Third Edition Handbooks there. That was the first time I was revealed to the masses and I remember feeling vaguely uncomfortable messing up people's books with my ugly scribbles!

At the Samurai Championships, Shawn and I were interviewed by the L5Rchives people. Sitting in front of cameras was a very, very weird feeling (yet strangely exhilarating).

MS: *What is your involvement specifically with the RPG line? What are the latest books you worked on (published or soon to be published)? Which of those makes you proud the most?*

BY: I've been a freelance writer for the RPG line since 2002 and I've worked on the majority of the books released since then. I've written a few Minor Clans in Fealty and Freedom and a couple more in the upcoming Vacant Throne. I also wrote the Dragon chapter on Masters of Magic and the Yodotai/Senpet chapters of the Legend of the Burning Sands book. I am most especially proud of my work on the Legend of the Burning Sands book, as I feel I painted an interesting picture of the past and future of foreign powers with little source information. The Yodotai 'foundation myth' was a blast to plot. Unfortunately, a chunk of my favorite work on the Yodotai was cut from the book.

MS: *Which of all the fictions you wrote is your favorite? The one you like the least?*

BY: Hmm. Souls of Steel 2 (http://www.l5r.com/story/souls-of-steel-part-2/) is a personal favorite, due to the interactions between Kyofu, Kuon, and Reiha. In my humble opinion, I nailed the characters pretty well. I don't like how I wrote The Return Home (http://www.lowfierce.com/kazenoshiro/7/h7e06p67.htm). I didn't do Lixue justice with it, neither is it particularly interesting. It feels like a simple exposition piece with no artistic merit to it.

Some more scenes: the fight scene between Chagatai and Kaneka did not come out as well as I'd envisioned. If I could do it again, I'd do it a bit differently. The tiny bit between Eien and Jisoo – absolutely fun. Satobe and some monks fighting in War of Dark Fire? Supremely fun, though I still feel the action felt stilted.

MS: *Do you have a favorite character or faction? How hard is it not to favor those when writing fictions? Inversely, is there a character or faction that causes you more trouble to write?*

BY: I enjoy writing Matsu Fumiyo and writing for the Crab faction is quite fun. I intentionally attempt to write for multiple clans so that I can cultivate a feel for the details that define each Clan. Still, I find myself asking for Lion fictions more often than not! :)

I must admit that I'm not too great at making Crane or Phoenix characters sparkle, but I'm working on that.

MS: *Do you play L5R CCG? If yes, which factions are your favorite, and what kind of deck/playstyle do you prefer?*

BY: My first introduction to the game was through the CCG. I've mostly played Lion and Unicorn, though I've gone to major tournaments with a whole assortment of different factions. I've been most successful with the Lion military decks (thanks Marty!) and Daidoji defensive honor. Still, my playgroup consists of... 3 people, including myself, so I've learned to play a whole variety of styles.

MS: *What are your inspirations, favorite writers and books (or movie, play, etc.)? Do they help you write?*

BY: I've been reading a lot of trash fantasy/science fiction lately, so I'm a bit embarrassed to reveal my favorites. I will say that I am enjoying Jim Butcher's books very much and I hope to one day make my action scenes pop like his! I don't really rely on any sources to help me write, though I often have some soundtrack music playing in the background as I write (replaced by Wu-Tang and pop rock during action scenes).

MS: *What advice would you offer to people trying their hand at creative writing? What are, in your opinion, the pitfalls to avoid when writing L5R fictions?*

BY: I wish I could give some helpful advice, but honestly I'm trying to get it all figured out myself! I think the best advice I can give is very generic: outline before you write. Sit down in front of the computer/notebook/napkin and keep writing. If you're stuck, switch to a different scene and keep writing. If you're working in an established setting, you need to do your research to make sure continuity flows.

The biggest thing to remember when writing L5R is that you must keep your audience in mind. It's an eastern setting with eastern sentiment but you're writing for a (largely) western audience. You must keep in mind to remain true to the setting but always remember that you should couch everything so that it would be understandable and acceptable to the reader. Love, especially, makes things difficult.

MS: *Are there any other games out there (from AEG or other companies) that you'd like to work on?*

BY: I'd love to work on In Nomine, though I believe the game line ended a while back. I think the new Star Wars Saga books are really exciting and different from the stuff they've released before. There's a ton of systems I've written for our personal RPG group that I would love to elaborate on (but get paid for, I mean).

MS: *If you could change one thing about the game/story to suit your personal taste, what would it be?*

BY: I think the Spider elimination is unfortunate, as the alternate possibilities were quite intriguing. That's the only thing in recent times that comes to mind.

MS: *What are the goals that you and AEG want to achieve with the upcoming RPG supplements (for the next year or two)?*

BY: My personal goals remain the same: present my best work in all of the RPG supplements, help develop and paint an interesting world, and create fun mechanics that catch the eyes of gamers worldwide! I believe AEG plans to flesh out areas of the setting that haven't been visited in Third Edition. The Minor Clans book filled an absence and the Vacant Throne is a good timeline book. I've worked on the timelines in both the Four Winds and Hidden Emperor, and Vacant Throne required much less fixing.

As for future books… well, I'm not at liberty to reveal anything! I'm very, very low on the totem pole. Subterranean, really.

MS: *What kind of dream product you'd like to see for the RPG, but is unlikely to happen due to the reality of the market?*

BY: I'd love to be able to do another series of Way of... books, heavy on the fluff and light on the mechanics. The original books made me fall in love with the setting and I'd love to be able to influence other gamers in the same way. We could focus on unsung heroes and their lives, detailing exciting adventures that might not have anything to do with the earthshaking events that pepper Rokugani history. However, splat books don't sell too well so I think I'll have to table that dream away.

MS: *What is, in your opinion, L5R's biggest obstacle that hinders it from becoming one of the biggest RPG on the market?*

BY: There are quite a few factors that limit L5R's growth. The editing problems are well documented and regrettable, but the brass knows about the issue. They've brought in two wonderful editors to work on the line and they've done wonders to improve the quality of the books. The second issue is just as large and unfortunately unfixable. The L5R setting itself is very restrictive in many ways. Characters must act according to a set of strict rules that limits a player's decisions. I've tried to introduce the L5R setting to more than a few players who just did not enjoy playing as a samurai.

MS: *The CCG has always been the driving force of the L5R storyline. Do you think the RPG should have some means to impact the storyline as well? If yes, how do you think this could be done?*

BY: I'm not entirely sure that the RPG line should impact the storyline because of the sheer mechanics involved. How do you reflect the results of thousands of different gaming tables? Each will go its own separate way, and many gamers will be dissatisfied even if we go with the majority.

That said, I know that Todd and Shawn are pushing RPG story involvement for books in 2009. We'll make it work!

MS: *What are your hobbies, the games you enjoy playing? Are you playing in a RPG campaign at the moment (L5R or other)?*

BY: I'm a big fan of MMORPGs and am currently mired in World of Warcraft (Alliance on the Stormreaver server). Currently, I'm in the middle of two RPG campaigns; a medieval setting with D&D4E rules and a Force Unleashed campaign with modified In Nomine mechanics. We've scheduled an L5R campaign once the Force Unleashed one runs its course.

MS: *Do you read Musha Shugyo? If yes, what do you think of it, what can be improved, and what do you think of fan-made material, in general?*

BY: I am very, very impressed with the quality of Musha Shugyo. The writing is solid and it just looks absolutely beautiful. It's clear that the L5R fans are creative and hard working! I realize it's hard to keep putting them out but I'd love to see more and more issues soon.

MS: *Is there anything else you'd like to say to the fans?*

BY: I love Legend of the Five Rings, and I would love to share this fervor with the fans. We're working very hard to produce the best books we can and I hope that we can meet your expectations!

MS: *Thanks for your time Brian!*

BY: Anytime!

Interview conducted in December 2008, updated in May 2009.

The Kenku

The Kenku are one of the Five Races that built a great civilization ages before the humans walked the face of the world. They are also the race of the Five that has survived the fall best. The Kitsu are all dead, the Zokujin are slowly wasting away, the trolls are Tainted and serve Jigoku and the Ningyo have retreated to the depths and little is heard from them now. To the Kenku, their race is all that is left of the great civilization the Five Races had.

Like the others of the Five Races, the Kenku were strongly aligned toward one of the elements that all Creation consists of; in their case Air.

Society and Psychology

The Kenku, in keeping with their strong alignment toward Air, are inquisitive, adventurous and hardly ever at rest. They are often quite knowledgeable and have an excellent ability to understand what they learn, not simply gather trivia. In the days before the Fall of the Kami, but after the fall of the Five Races they wandered about enough to gain a reputation as wise and generally benevolent spirits among the emerging human tribes. If the Kenku can be said to have one common trait, it is the desire to learn. Whether this means knowledge such as the Phoenix are fond of, or mastery of a skill or art form in the manner of the Crane, is irrelevant.

Kenku can live an extraordinarily long time, if they are so inclined. While the race as a whole rarely lives more than a couple centuries, certain individuals can live for a millennium or more with no loss of physical or mental ability. Such individuals are always skilled in several areas and quite wise. For instance, Kozue, the Kenku who aided Doji Yasurugi was still alive and hale when Doji Yasuo undertook her quest.

The Kenku are peaceful creatures on the whole. They do not go out of their way to look for trouble, nor do they wish to stay and fight if they can run. Only fools take this to be cowardice or lack of ability - the average Kenku is at least as proficient with the sword as the average samurai. The Kenku swordmasters are duelists and warriors to put the Kakita masters to shame. Some sages have even speculated that Kakita himself learned at the feet of a Kenku master. No one can recall a Kenku ever answering these suggestions.

Kenku society is almost an oxymoron. They have familial connections, and they have friends, but there is little in the way of organized society. A mated pair will raise the offspring together, as a rule, though either parent may take full responsibility for the children, leaving the other to wander off. Kenku lay a single egg, which is zealously guarded from all threats. The young Kenku grows to adulthood in roughly thirty years. During this time they are educated in a very informal manner - much like peasants are educated in Rokugan - the young Kenku just observes his parent(s) and imitates them. There is no formal schooling forced on the Kenku. Once a Kenku decides he wishes to learn something, he generally seeks out a teacher and learns all he can.

Most of the Kenku live in Sakkaku - the Realm of Mischief. When they realized that the humans were the new chosen race of Ningen-do, they slowly began finding a new home. Sakkaku was chosen because it allowed the Kenku to live mostly peacefully, but in a world that encouraged forethought, learning and humility. Many Kenku still wander the Mortal realm, though very few actually live there. Those few who do are hidden in the depths of ancient forests like Shinomen or Isawa Mori or Kitsune Mori.

History and Myths

The Kenku are the one of the Five Races that has had most contact with humans in general. That is, discounting the extermination of the Kitsu, the enslavement of the Zokujin and the destruction of the trolls. They realized quickly that humans were special, and gradually retreated from Ningen-do when the human tribes came about. Humans are like children, the Kenku feel. They have great potential and show great insight every so often, but are lacking in knowledge and experience, and overly concerned with petty trifles.

The Kenku are the first race to come about, according to their legends. In their extensive oral histories they recount how the world was empty and void until the wind started blowing, creating the first Kenku. The Kenku went with the wind, seeing how the lands gradually developed due to wind. The still water got its power and movement from the waves the wind stirred up. Fire blossomed as wind fed it air. The earth grew green and fertile from the water blown on to the land.

The Kenku rejoiced in the world and set out to explore it, learning all they could. In time other races came about. The wind blew down the mountains, revealing the Zokujin. It blew the fire large enough that the trolls could waken in its heart. The waves it caused coalesced into the Ningyo, and out of he void in the absence of the wind came the Kitsu. The Kenku were interested and came to greet the new arrivals. After providing guidance

and education, the Kenku saw how the new races had strengths and weaknesses unique to them. The Kenku envisioned a society where the five races could complement each other, and each learn from the others. When the Kitsu suggested it, the Kenku were the first to agree.

For years uncounted, the Five Races grew together. As long-lived and cautious despite their curiosity, they grew slowly. During this time, the Kenku learned of the worlds beyond this one, and how they were in opposition to each other. This world, the World of Sky and Shore as they called it, was a nexus - a center point where the other worlds could easily gather against each other and try to tip the balance. As life in the World of Sky and Shore went in cycles - life grew strong, withered and died, the seasons change - so did the other realms work in cycles. Every couple of lifetimes or so, the realms of the Whirlwind (known to humans as Jigoku and possibly Toshigoku and/or Gaki-do - human scholars have not managed to get this straight) and the realms of the Four Winds (probably Tengoku and Yomi, possibly including Meido and Yume-do) would come to blows. The winner would dominate the World of Sky and Shore for the next several generations. Having seen what the world was like under the Whirlwind before the time of the Five Races, the Kenku also knew it was inevitable that they would fail at some time. Though they fought with their fellows several times and emerged victorious, they were prepared to leave. When the Whirlwind finally won, the event known to the Kenku as the Reaving Storm, they were prepared. Many Kenku had already fled, seeking shelter and preparing for the world in darkness.

Though the Kenku have never regained the heights of civilization and cooperation they once had, they were also the race to best handle the reign of darkness. They did not lose their identity and purpose as the Zokujin did, they did not lose their intelligence and drive as the trolls did, they did not lose their will towards self-improvement as the Kitsu did, and did not abandon their former allies totally as the Ningyo did.

In recent times, some Kenku scholars wonder if their foresight and readiness to abandon the cause of the Five Races actually allowed the Whirlwind to win. Since they were ready to cut their losses, they did not give their all in combating the forces of chaos, some Kenku fear.

Relations with Other Races

Humans

In general, the Kenku are of two minds about the humans. On the one hand, they are balanced within the elements to a degree that few other creatures can boast. This can lead to great insights and greatness of spirit, but it also leads to greater imbalance and pettiness than most of the Five Races could manage. Yet the Kenku are probably the one of the Five Races to have most contact with humans. As master swordsmen, they occasionally take on a worthy student and teach them secrets of the blade. As curious and inquisitive, some Kenku wander the human lands in disguise, experiencing the richness of human life and culture.

Relations with the Clans

Crab - The Kenku have very little in common with the Crab. As a clan dedicated to killing, with little time for artistic pursuits and finding their own path in life, they hold little interest for the Kenku in general. Their fighting prowess is to be admired, even if they do not use a proper sword much of the time, but they are hard-bitten, suspicious and inclined to kill anything that might be Tainted. Few Kenku want to take the chance that some over-muscled, under-brained thug will plant a tetsubo in their head because the Crab could not be bothered to think a bit before acting.

There is also the matter of how Osano-wo and the Crab declared war on the Trolls and wiped out what little civilization they had left. Kenku, if they ever come into contact with Crab, are most likely to avoid them or play annoying pranks and leave.

Crane - Of all the Clans of the Empire, the Crane are most dear to the Kenku. A clan dedicated to the finer things in life: art, expression, enriching the life of the empire and themselves. A clan dedicated to perfecting oneself. A clan with the most talented swordsmen in the Empire (at least to their own minds). The vast majority of the few humans the Kenku choose to reveal themselves to are Crane, and of the few humans fortunate enough to learn Kenku sword techniques, less than a handful have come from clans other than the Crane. The greatest drawback with the Crane is that some of them are too convinced of their own greatness to believe that they can learn something from an oversized crow. Crane who know the legends of Kenku will be honored, of course.

Dragon - The Dragon are mysterious to their fellow humans, but less so to most nonhumans. The Dragon are in general thoughtful and considerate, more willing to look beyond what they think they know and learn about others. The Kenku can often appear in their true form to a Dragon - especially the Tamori and Togashi - and be met with a polite greeting rather than a challenge. Until recently, the Dragon mountains had a wealth of powerful entities looking after the Dragon. For a millennium Togashi himself watched over the mountains, then Hitomi's brief stint with madness, which did not encourage any Kenku to visit. Togashi's presence was felt almost subconsciously by Kenku in the Dragon lands, and they often felt a little intimidated, and so usually stayed out of the mountains. Hitomi's madness only reinforced this feeling. Kenku have not visited the Dragon mountains since the fall of the Lord Moon and the death of Lady Sun, but will find the general atmosphere more agreeable when they eventually do so. The fact that the Dragon have the friendship of the local Zokujin tribe speaks well of them.

Lion - The Lion are avoided by the Kenku. Akodo killed almost all the Kitsu, then enslaved the Zokujin, and have proven themselves to be expansionistic, militaristic, aggressive and xenophobic. While there are honorable exceptions amongst the Lion, and in all clans, the Kenku have little interest in the Lion. Even the Kitsu family seems more like a travesty than an apology to the Kenku.

Mantis - The Mantis are strong, independent and interested in making their own way through life. These

qualities are admired by the Kenku, but they feel the Mantis are on the whole a little too immature. They are too concerned with baubles and wealth for the sake of wealth than improving themselves and others, and their close connection with Osano-wo makes the Kenku wary of them in general.

Phoenix - The Phoenix have a reputation for peace and knowledge, which makes them quite attractive to the Kenku. Shiba was the only kami to show proper humility and foresight, to the Kenku's way of thinking. Despite their dedication to peace, the Phoenix have shown much arrogance and ignorance. The Phoenix seem to be blinded by their power and ideals, and the Kenku feel sad for this unfulfilled potential. Had the Phoenix as a whole been able to overcome their arrogance and understand that the world is more than simply a place for humans, they could achieve great things. As it stands, they are on the cusp of greatness but never go farther because they cannot see there is more to learn.

Scorpion - The Scorpion are a clan of liars, thieves, assassins and cads. They are also cunning, manipulative and dangerous. On the whole, the Kenku avoid them. Their vaunted 'sacrifice for the greater good' is rarely reserved for the greater good of the Empire, and mostly used for the greater good of the Scorpion, though they will grudgingly admit the Scorpion do not seem to actively want to destroy the Empire. Since the majority of Scorpion are looking for a way to use others to their ends, the Kenku rarely make contact with them.

Unicorn - The Unicorn are adventurous, inquisitive and the clan with the closest connections to the Naga. For this reason, the Kenku think of them as their second, or third favorite clan. Though more bitten by wanderlust than most Kenku, they understand the desire to see things beyond their home. The recent ascension of the Moto to leadership has the Kenku worried. While the Shinjo were open, gregarious and focused on protecting the lower castes, the Moto are warlike, aggressive and want to show off their power. The fact that the kami Shinjo chose them as her successors questions her sanity, to the mind of the Kenku. The Moto have done more to damage the Empire than the Shinjo ever did, despite their 'Kolat' ties (though the Kenku never really understood the concept of the Kolat).

Imperials - The Kenku are generally amused by the Imperials. They stuff themselves up and parade around trying to be impressive, but generally look like fools. The Seppun are boring, the Miya scurry about and the Otomo cause imbalance while trying to balance things. No Kenku has ever made a serious friendship with an Imperial.

Monks - Shinsei achieved enlightenment by reading ancient texts left by the Kenku, so some stories go. For this reason, the Brotherhood of Shinsei is welcoming to any Kenku. Most Kenku find them a bit dull, even if their hearts are in the right place. Monks of the Fortunes are a varied lot, but most have little reason to dislike the Kenku and vice versa. The only notable exception is the Order

of Osano-wo. The monks do not care either way for the Kenku, but the Kenku dislike a group dedicated to the values of the man who destroyed the Trolls.

Yobanjin - The Yobanjin are the traditional outside enemies of the Empire, and show little interest in art and culture beyond a primitive stage. While at least one Kenku has developed a fondness for them, most ignore them. Yet before the Fall of the Kami, Kenku spent time in what would later become the Emerald Empire and had a reputation for wisdom and learning. Some Yobanjin still remember this, if vaguely.

Shadowlands/Spider - The Shadowlands are the ancient enemy of the Kenku. However, since they failed to defeat Jigoku on the day the Zokujin know as the Day of Broken Thunder, they have mostly ignored the Shadowlands. They will fight it where they can, but do not go looking for it. Ningen-do has found new champions, and the time of the Kenku has passed. Kenku will not willingly work with anyone Tainted or anyone who supports Fu Leng or his minions.

Beyond Rokugan - While some Kenku are familiar with the Jinn and the humans of the Burning Sands, they have stayed out of the area. For all intents and purposes, there is no contact with humans outside the Emerald Empire.

Nonhumans

Shapeshifters - The Kenku get along well with most Shapeshifters, especially crane and fox. Despite their intelligence, the majority of Shapeshifters tend to be too

Creating a Kenku character

To create a Kenku Character, follow the same rules you would for a human character, but with a starting number of Character Points reduced by 5. Kenku do not have a Family Trait Benefit, but gain a +1 to Agility. They always begin at Rank 1 in the Kenku Swordsman school (CoR3E, p.5), which confers a +1 to Reflexes, but may later enter other human schools if they wish, on the condition they possess the Multiple School and Ally (human sensei) Advantages. Just like the Nezumi, Kenku characters have a Void Ring that counts in their Insight and may limit the number of Raises they can make, but they cannot spend their Void Points on anything other than their Rank 5 Kenku Swordsman school technique.

All Kenku can fly at twice their normal movement rate. The maximum weight they can carry while flying is equal to their own weight, and when doing so, their flying movement rate is severely reduced (down to their normal movement rate in most cases, or even half of it if nearing their limit). Kenku lose the ability to fly when they are at the Hurt Wound level or worse. You can fly for as long as your character could run, which means Raw Stamina rolls might be required by the Gamemaster the longer you remain flying, with increasing TN.

Kenku characters are limited regarding the Advantages and Disadvantages they can take. Consider that they follow the same restrictions as the Naga characters (see CoR3E, p.32), with the exception that they can use Multiple Schools. They also cannot take the Bland Advantage. However, they have access to a few Advantages that are reserved to the Kenku (see below).

Resilient [Inherent] (8 Points)

Despite their light build, Kenku are very resilient creatures. Your number of wounds per Wound Level that is normally equal to Earth x2 is instead equal to Earth x2.5 (rounded down).

Shapeshift (2 Points)

Most Kenku have the ability to appear human for a limited time. Once per day, you may assume human form for a maximum duration of 60 minutes. Using this ability requires a Complex Action. Your human form is which of an elderly human male with a particularly long nose. It might fool observers from a distance or when illumination is insufficient, but a closer look at your face often reveals your true nature (Perception/Investigation TN 15 to recognize you as a Kenku from short range, TN 30 or more in other situations).

Spellcaster [Inherent] (10 Points)

Some Kenku are able to cast spells as a shugenja. You can use magic as if you were a Shugenja with a School Rank equal to half your Insight rank (rounded down), meaning you cannot cast spells at all until you reach Insight Rank 2. Your shugenja school technique, Affinity/Deficiency, and starting spells are determined as if you were a Soshi shugenja. However, you do not automatically receive new spells when you reach a new rank in your shugenja school (i.e. at Insight Rank 4, 6, 8 and so on). You must instead gain them from another spellcaster willing to share them with you. This can be handled with roleplaying, and/or by spending 4XP per new spell (maximum 2 new spells per Insight Rank in this fashion), at the Gamemaster's discretion. You cannot use the Multiple School Advantage to enter any other shugenja school.

Wings of Steel (3 Points)

You are particularly skilled at using your natural ability to fly, which gives you an edge in combat. In melee combat, if you are flying, the bonus you gain as you attack from higher ground is -4 TN instead of -2, and your opponents suffer a +5 TN penalty when trying to hit you from lower ground (the penalty remains +2 TN for ranged attacks).

Mikael Brodu

animalistic in their outlook and habits to get into conflict with the Kenku over the usual matters (land, resources, political power, etc.).

Kitsu/Tsuno - After the fall of the Five Races civilization, the Kenku and Kitsu were the races that kept in closest contact. When Akodo started his campaign of eradication, the Kenku did not aid the Kitsu. The Kitsu were furious, but too proud to ask for help. Now there are no Kitsu left, and the Kenku honor their memory by trying to be wise and balanced as well as inquisitive and perfectionist. The return of the tsuno to the Mortal Realm was not unexpected by the Kenku. They knew the tsuno would find a way home some day. Knowing the Kenku were too disjointed and individualistic to defend themselves should the tsuno come looking for revenge, the Kenku simply hid and hoped that the humans would take care of the situation.

Nezumi - The Kenku had great hopes for the Nezumi. They started out as mindless beasts but bootstrapped themselves to sentience and had a growing, vibrant civilization. They also had a mystical connection to dreams, and the Kenku were entranced. For a while most Kenku were split as to who would be the new masters of Ningen-do: the Nezumi or the humans. The Fall of the Kami answered the question once and for all, and though they admired he cunning and skill it took to survive in the Shadowlands, the Kenku knew the Nezumi would never amount to anything great. The intensely practical and pragmatic world-view of the Nezumi contrasts sharply with the drive towards excellence and self-improvement of the Kenku, and the intensely communal nature of the Nezumi is at odds with the individualistic Kenku. The two races have had few interactions, and little in common.

Ogres - Being one of the few races to recall the ogres in their prime, the Kenku have a deep respect for their power even as they despise the ogres for their brutality. Falling under the sway of Fu Leng and becoming dumb brutes has not helped their image, and the Kenku avoid them whenever possible. Should the Kenku become aware that some of the ogres have regained proper sentience and many of their racial memories, they might even overcome their dislike of the Crab to give them a proper warning. This would be meddling in the affairs of Ningen-do, something the Kenku do not do much any more, but the threat of the ogres rising again with the backing of Fu Leng is too perilous to ignore.

Trolls - Despite the fact that they were once of the Five Races, the trolls are nothing more than degenerate brutes now. Their once-vaunted intellect is reduced to animal cunning and cowardice. Their many achievements are but ruins or dust. The Kenku see this as a great tragedy. Out of respect for their former allies, the Kenku will not attack trolls if at all possible. The Kenku are more interested in trying to find a way to undo Fu Leng's corruption of them.

Ningyo - The Ningyo stick to the depths of the oceans, and the Kenku stay on land. Since the Great Fall, there have been a bare handfull of times these two races have met, and each time it led to nothing much. They would likely aid each other should one come across another in need, but they are not likely to go out of their way to re-establish ties.

Zokujin - Since the Great Fall, the Zokujin have retreated from the world at large. The Kenku pity them and their obsession with their precious Bloodwhite Stone and their general apathy. They were always slow to move, but now they have stagnated. The Kenku have moved on, while the Zokujin are stuck in the past. They must find their own way forward, though this seems increasingly unlikely.

Mujina, Pekkle etc. - As the Kenku have moved to Sakkaku, their closest neighbors are these trickster spirits. The Kenku get along well with them, as the Kenku seem to have a sense of humor, and the Kenku like the 'little children' and help them when possible. Tainted pekkle are pitied and generally exposed to the humans when a Kenku becomes aware of their presence.

Kenku PCs

With their individualism and curiosity, Kenku might very well join a group of humans for a short time to observe and possibly educate them. Of all the nonhumans that might join a group of humans, the Kenku are possibly the race that would be most welcomed by all clans. Though not quite as well-known to the Empire in general as the Nezumi or Naga, the Kenku are in general known to the Brotherhood, and most characters with some knowledge of the Dawn of the Empire and Shinsei's history might recall that there is a reason that the Kenku were respected in Shinsei's time.

Being what they are, a Kenku might be a pain to have along. They are fond of lessons taught in the form of pranks, and touchy samurai with inflated opinions of themselves are favorite targets. This can make traveling with a Kenku tiresome. Those samurai with a sense of humility will find the Kenku more pleasant and their lessons to be less bitter, if no less instructive.

Hida Akira

The Kitsu

The Kitsu are, perhaps, one of the most enigmatic races of Rokugan, and certainly one of the most tragic. They are a race of extremely intelligent, humanoid, lion-like creatures that formed one of the great pre-human civilizations of Rokugan. Their early history is largely unknown, save for the fact that, along with the Kenku, the Zokujin, the Trolls and the Ningyo, they constructed the great City of Night, now a ruin beneath Seikitsu Pass in the Spine of the World Mountains.

The Kitsu enter recorded Rokugani history shortly after the Fall of the Kami. The Kami Akodo, seeking to fulfill his duty to his brother Hantei and secure the growing Empire against incursions by the minions of Fu Leng, undertook a campaign of extermination against the Kitsu. Only when he had all but slaughtered the Kitsu did Akodo come to realize the truth—the great beasts were actually noble, intelligent and honorable creatures, offering no threat to the Empire. Akodo accepted what seemed to be the last five surviving Kitsu into the Lion Clan, where they formed the foundation for that Clan's Kitsu family.

However, the Kitsu reappear later in the Empire's history, this time writing a much darker chapter, in the form of the Tsuno. The Tsuno were originally a band of renegade Kitsu, led by a Kitsu named Kishenku, who sought to seize control of the City of Night—possibly as a result of the influence of Jigoku. They failed, releasing vast forces in a cataclysm that almost destroyed the City and the land around it. The surviving Kitsu of the Tsuno band, led by Kishenku's son, Nintai, were pursued and eventually cornered by loyal Kitsu and forces of the other four races that had built the City. Banished to Toshigoku, the Realm of Slaughter, the Kitsu were twisted and corrupted into the vile creatures that came to be called the Tsuno.

Over the ensuing centuries, Tsuno Nintai and the other Tsuno refined their ability to traverse the Spirit Realms and began to meddle in Rokugani affairs. In particular, they sought vengeance on the Lion Clan, within which remained the last un-corrupted vestiges of the original Kitsu race. In recent Rokugani times, the Tsuno allied with Matsu Turi, the Dark Oracle of Water, and ravaged the Lion Hall of Ancestors and the Kitsu Tombs. They also sided with the Dark Lord of the Shadowlands, Daigotsu, aiding him in creating the Onisu—especially

Kanashimi, the Tsuno-like Nightmare of the Lion Clan. In league with Moto Vordu, an insane Unicorn shugenja, they once again sought to usurp the latent power of crystal artifacts in the ruins of the City of Night, but were thwarted by Hantei Naseru when he turned those very powers against them.

Perhaps the darkest accomplishment of the Tsuno, however, was their co-opting of the Stained Paw Tribe of the Nezumi. The tribe's Rememberers had died in a plague, leaving them helpless to resist the manipulation of the Tsuno. The Tsuno and their pawns in the Stained Paw drew the One Tribe of the Nezumi into Toshigoku and almost succeeded in destroying them. And yet, this proved to be the Tsunos' undoing. During their final confrontation in Toshigoku, the Nezumi shaman Te'tik'kir sacrificed himself to restore Tsuno Nintai's name, causing him to revert back to his uncorrupted Kitsu form. Appalled at what he had become and done, Nintai banished the other Tsuno to Toshigoku and saved the Nezumi.

Nintai was, as far as anyone in Rokugan knows, the last remaining Kitsu. He stayed with the Nezumi, watching over their physical bodies when they fought their last, great battle against Tomorrow in the Realm of Dream; he subsequently carried out the sad task of interring their bodies when it became clear that the Nezumi would not be returning to Ningen-do. Until his death at the hands of the Spider Clan in 1170, he lived in a shrine to Te'tik'kir built by the Lion Clan in the Shinomen Mori. With his death, it appears an end has come to the once proud and noble Kitsu race.

The Legacy of the Kitsu

The most obvious legacy of the Kitsu in Rokugan is their namesake family of the Lion Clan. Shugenja of the Kitsu can trace their lineage back to the original five Kitsu accepted into the Lion by Akodo, as a token of penance for his near-destruction of their race. It is believed that these Kitsu came to assume human form and were wedded to Akodo's daughters. The resulting bloodline lasts to this day. Its bearers possess an innate sensitivity to, and understanding of, spirits and the realms they inhabit to an extent largely unknown among shugenja not of the Kitsu bloodline. These so-called sodan-senzo, while best known for their ability to commune with ancestor and other spirits, also have the ability—to varying degrees, depending on the individual and the strength of their blood tie to the original Kitsu—to actually cross the Spirit Realms. Other shugenja can, with considerable effort, achieve such a feat, but the Kitsu excel in these otherworldly travels. Such endeavors are not without risk, however, as the spirits and other denizens of these realms are not always friendly. To conceal their identities, sodan-senzo typically wear masks that resemble the leonine faces of Kitsu when walking among the Spirit Realms. It is said that, with greater exposure to spirit magic and the Realms themselves, the outward appearance of a sodan-senzo will actually begin to mimic that of a Kitsu. Kitsu Juri, Daimyo of the Kitsu Family from 1150 to 1166, was said to actually assume the form of a Kitsu while traveling the Spirit Realms, such was the strength of his connection to the original Kitsu bloodline.

The other important aspect of the Kitsu legacy concerns the race itself. Between the slaughter inflicted on them by Akodo, and those lost to the dark fate of the Tsuno, the race is believed to be all but extinct. The only known survivor was Nintai, dwelling alone in the Shinomen Mori until he was killed by the Spider Clan. Given their ability to traverse the Spirit Realms, however, it is conceivable that other Kitsu have survived and now dwell in other planes of existence. Even if this is true, it is unlikely that such survivors would be willing to return to Ningen-do. It is in the Realm of Mortals that the Kitsu have suffered their greatest tragedies, so only some dire need would be likely to bring them back. Those most likely to know the truth about the existence of other Kitsu—the sodan-senzo of the Lion—are not likely to share such knowledge with others.

Soshi Ukyo

Blood Ties with the Kitsu Family

Some Lion Clan shugenja of the Kitsu family have strong blood ties with their feline Kitsu ancestors. Those characters sometimes exhibit this heritage in the form of unique powers. See p.54 for the Kitsu Spiritual Abilities.

The Ningyo

Goshuin let himself be carried away by the current, slowly sinking deeper and deeper into the depths. A dark red haze was forming around his waist, below his dorsal fin, where the human thieves had speared him twice.

Moments before, inches below the surface of the sea, Goshuin had been looking at a small boat filled with half a dozen humans. He was still young, and maybe too curious for his own good, as the elders often told him, but he was confident in his scouting skills. He had been assigned to guard a Ningyo pearl farm, the products of which were shared with their Naga allies. Goshuin had perceived the characteristic vibrations in the water announcing the arrival of a boat long before he could see it, and he had instantly decided to investigate the intruders rather than wait and hide the pearls from the humans with a simple illusion, as he had been instructed. He watched them preparing to dive, armed with serrated spears. These humans appeared to be of the worst kind: pearl divers; thieves. Goshuin had though that he could scare them away, first by rocking their boat from below, unseen, but that had only made them angry. Some of the thieves had jumped into the water, and one had even managed to see him. He had tried to dodge the attacks, all the while luring them away from the pearls, but the humans were more experienced than he had expected.

Along the Edge of Canon

This article reveals aspects of the Ningyo and Rokugan's past that have not, thus far, been shown in the canon world of Rokugan. I took great care to research all published references and weave them together as seamlessly as possible with my ideas, and I believe the resulting story could fit in the canon Rokugani paradigm, as a major secret waiting to be revealed. In a way, the scope of the ideas presented here is similar to that of the revelations that came with the discovery of the City of Night and the Five Races Alliance. Before this event, no one (IC or OOC) would have imagined that the Kitsu, Troll, Ningyo, Kenku and Zokujin were such ancient races that had known a golden era and a great civilization. But ultimately, this article remains homebrew material and is of course subject to the Gamemaster's approval.

References used include: *Way of the Naga, Way of the Phoenix, Secrets of the Crab, Secrets of the Unicorn, Fortunes & Winds, Creatures of Rokugan D20, Creatures of Rokugan 3E, The Four Winds, Prayers and Treasures, Imperial Herald* v.2 #15, several canon fictions (including *The Golden Tower*), and several cards from the L5R CCG.

"Hiki, there! Just below the prow! No, on your left now! There!"

One human had finally hit him with a glancing stab. Goshuin had felt the rusted steel slice his hide, but knew it wasn't more than a superficial cut.

"Well done Hiki, you got that beast!"

"Cursed Ningyo! That'll teach it not to mess with us," said the man as his head surfaced next to the boat. "Saki, hand me the net, I want to finish that mons…" But Hiki's sentence was cut as he had been suddenly pulled below the water. Goshuin had wanted revenge, and had come back for a fierce bite on the man's leg.

"Kill it! Kill it!" shouted Saki. "Tomoko, Shin, Hana! Help Hiki! The harpoons!"

The underwater battle had been decidedly in Goshuin's favor until the other humans on the boat started to take wild strikes at him. Twice they had pierced his hide, and the pain was great. He had been outnumbered, and approaching them had been a mistake. He wouldn't let himself be captured, though, and he had fled, acting as if he had been mortally wounded.

Now he was deep enough under the sea that he knew he was invisible to the thieves. From a pouch at his side, he took a handful of sticky balm to close and heal his wounds. Then he waited, listening to the sounds above.

The humans were diving. They were too close to the pearl farm and could discover it at any moment. Goshuin dived down, back to his home city, as fast as he could. Soon, he would be back with reinforcements, and he would teach those humans not to defy the Ningyo.

Beginnings

At the origin of world, in the spirit realm that is now called Ningen-do, the realm of Mortals, five great races coexisted peacefully. They were the Kenku, the Zokujin, the Trolls, the Ningyo, and the Kitsu. Together the five races put order in the then chaotic elements, using their natural affinity with some of the elemental kami, creating the five distinct elements we know today: Air (Kenku), Earth (Zokujin), Fire (Trolls), Water (Ningyo), and Void (Kitsu). They created an advanced civilization and built majestic cities that combined feats of engineering and magic, the City of Night being their crown achievement. Later, the betrayal of a Kitsu, followed by a great disaster that nearly annihilated them all, destroyed the alliance of the five races. The Ningyo, surprised and frightened by these cataclysmic events (collectively know as the Sundering), retreated to their favored environment: water. They sought safety and seclusion in the depths of the seas

and lakes, building their homes far from the other races, and outsiders were forever branded as untrustworthy and dangerous.

In time, the Ningyo's physiology evolved to better suit their new permanent habitat. Originally able to breathe air or water indifferently, they eventually became solely water breathing creatures and refined their underwater communication abilities. Their psyche apparently suffered from the passage of time and the hardships of isolation, as today's Ningyo seem far less evolved than their ancestors who helped build the City of Night. To the sailors who have met them, they act like elusive mischievous pranksters, and the tools and weapons they use are crude compared to Rokugani standards. Most Rokugani would say they are barely above animals, and many would compare them to Nezumi in terms of civilization advancement.

Yet, they seem to be able to get along well with the peaceful Naga, in particular with the Chameleon bloodline, and they have brokered an alliance with the great sea serpents, the Orochi.

These seemingly conflicting facts only highlight the hidden truth that most human scholars are content to leave undisturbed: what humanity knows of the Ningyo is limited to what the Ningyo want humanity to know. They keep their civilization and achievements hidden from humanity behind a veil of half-truths, illusions and plain deceit.

The Hidden Civilization

The original betrayal that led to the fall of the five races' alliance deeply marked the Ningyo. The Sundering was a defining factor in how they perceive outsiders, even those that are seemingly well-intentioned and peaceful. Ever since they retreated to the depths of Rokugan's sea and lakes, they have done all they can to remain unseen and avoid all contact with other races, with the exception of the Orochi and Naga.

To achieve this goal, their first and greatest asset is obviously the location of their settlements. Most of their cities are so deep under the sea or so well hidden in murky waters that no human could find them. Even powerful shugenja able to protect themselves from the pressure and suffocation wouldn't know where to look in the immensity of the oceans. In these locations, the darkness is total, further hindering human searches. The Ningyo can go about unaffected in complete obscurity, thanks to their ability to "see" in these conditions (they actually perceive the aquatic world in the same way that dolphins do, with some sort of natural sonar sense, which explains why they do not rely on sight in the dark depths).

Even if humans somehow succeeded in capturing a Ningyo, and they managed to communicate with him, it wouldn't be able to explain how to find the cities. Due to the powerful deep sea currents that can hinder or speed up movement, the Ningyo do not use distance to measure how far apart two locations are, but rather time. The *lihman* is their travel unit, and is roughly equivalent to two minutes. Depending on whether the Ningyo

is swimming against or with the current, the number of lihman necessary to reach destination is different. Two locations could be separated by only five lihman one way, but twelve lihman on the way back when swimming against the current. When adding to this system variables such as tides and seasonal current shifts, things that are instinctively understood and integrated by the Ningyo, it becomes obvious why Ningyo indications are incomprehensible to anyone but other Ningyo and sentient water-dwelling creatures. A Ningyo will never guide outsiders to his home under duress. He would rather die, and in fact, most captured Ningyo wither and die very quickly.

If unexpected visitors approach their cities, the last layer of non-violent protection is illusion magic. Most Ningyo are born with some degree of magical ability. In fact, if the theory about the water kami acting as thought carriers holds some truth, then all Ningyo are able to instinctively perform limited forms of magic. Ningyo magic is detailed further below, but for the moment, it suffices to say that they are adept at hiding themselves underwater, to a point that approaches invisibility. Some are able to extend this ability to their surrounding (again, only while underwater), which allows them to conceal their homes from the mundane eye.

Finally, if everything else fails and some stubborn (or unlucky) outsiders come too close to a Ningyo settlement, hostile confrontation is the last resort. If cornered, the Ningyo will not hesitate to defend their home, but they would rather not fight if they have a choice. That is why, a long time ago, Ryujin the immortal the king of the Ningyo made a pact with the Orochi. In exchange for providing the Orochi sanctuary in Ningen-do, the Ningyo received the fealty and protection of the powerful Orochi, the gigantic sea serpents originally from the Spirit realm of Sakkaku. Very few creatures would be able to face the

Orochi and survive, and the great Orochi have proven to be the ultimate deterrent against would-be invaders.

The Sundered

Little is known, even by the Ningyo, about the magical upheaval that sounded the death knell of the five races' alliance. Even less is understood about the Sundering's effect on some Ningyo, but the results are plain to see: shortly after the Sundering, about a quarter of the Ningyo suffered from memory loss, disorientation, fits of rage or autistic behavior. It soon was evident that the young were the primary victims of this condition, and even some newborns that had hatched in secure locations, away from the ill Ningyo, showed the same symptoms. In a few years, many of the victims had died, but most had evolved into something horrifying to the other Ningyo: they lost almost all ability for logical thinking and reverted to some primal state of the species. With the souls of friends and family scarred beyond recognition by the Sundering, turning them into near-mindless feral predators, the Ningyo didn't know how to react. Some tried to find a cure, to take care of their sick kinfolk. Most were simply too afraid and unable to cope with the changes the ill Ningyo brought in their life, and they rejected them. Worse, the feral Ningyo did not seek nor want help, and most fled to the wilds to escape the confinement often imposed on them by their brethren.

The Ningyo call them the *Gash-Huul*, the Sundered. Left to their own devices, the Sundered instinctively gathered in nomadic schools, rebuilding a semblance of culture based on hazy memories of their previous lives. These tribes of Ningyo hunters-gatherers soon became a threat to their civilized kinfolk, as they competed for the same resources. The Sundered pillaged the Ningyo's fish farms and wreaked havoc in their cities until they had to be chased and kept away by force, and later with illusion magic.

The tragedy of the Sundered did not end with this lost generation. In the cities of the Ningyo, one out of three new hatchlings, on average, grows up with the same disease. These young Ningyo invariably rebel and leave the cities to join the Sundered tribes.

The Sundered share the same language as the Ningyo, although they speak a crude form of it. They create primitive weapons and works of art, and some of their leaders are occasionally intelligent enough to enter into trade agreements with other Sundered tribes, or even more rarely, with other races. But they have no love for their former brethren and usually stay away from them, or attack them when their tribe is in times of need.

Despite the distorted dark image of themselves the Sundered reflect to the Ningyo, they never tried to eradicate them. They could not resolve themselves to kill their own, and were simply satisfied with keeping them at bay. In time, the Ningyo understood the Sundered provided another layer of protection to their own people, albeit unintentionally. Indeed, as they are less afraid of confronting humans or other outsiders when they hunt, the Sundered are the aspect of the Ningyo population that other races are most likely to encounter. So far, it has served the Ningyo well that the humans believe them all to be as primitive as the Sundered.

Language

Due to their marine habitat, the Ningyo rarely use vocal speech. Without air, it is simply impractical. The Ningyo remember the languages they used when they shared the lands with the other old races, and most of their scholars can still speak the ancient troll language, which was the *lingua franca* at the time of the five races, as well as the Naga language that they learned later during the centuries of cooperation and friendship with the snake people. Only a few know how to speak Rokugani, as contact with the humans is forbidden. Obviously, such languages are used only in the rare occasions when a Ningyo emerges to communicate with non-aquatic beings, and only for a short time, as without some sort of magical help, the Ningyo will quickly suffocate.

While underwater, the Ningyo communicate amongst themselves with their own form of speech. *Solish*, as it is called by Ningyo, is an intricate mix of guttural sub-vocalization emitted from the Ningyo's upper chest that any other Ningyo can perceive via their fins and skin, and some sort of close range telepathy. As the telepathy doesn't function out of water, Ningyo scholars theorize that the thoughts are actually carried by water kami, over a short range (usually not more than 100 feet). The water kami do not seem to be very discerning about the target of the thought, however, as any Ningyo in range will automatically "hear" a thought projected to another Ningyo. The very communal Ningyo do not mind this small loss of privacy, as it ensures a greater honesty between them. It also allows them to perform complex group actions, which is particularly useful in battle or when hunting. Furthermore, when Ningyo wish to communicate privately, they can use their telepathic ability when touching each other. Their thoughts will then pass only between the members that are in physical contact. However, doing this requires full concentration, as the Ningyo must focus on communicating with a particular individual, or he would naturally revert to projecting thoughts to anyone in range.

A Note about Ryujin

Canon sources are conflicting regarding the identity of Ryujin. In some texts, he is the king of the Orochi at the time the alliance with the Ningyo was brokered ("The Legend of White Shore Lake", *Imperial Herald* volume 2, #15). In some others, he is the current king of the Ningyo (*Creatures of Rokugan* for the 2nd Edition, p.59; *Fortunes and Winds*, p.49), and elsewhere he is the king of the Ningyo at the time the alliance with the Orochi was made (*Fortunes and Winds*, p.108). He is even described once as a coral dragon (*Secret of the Crab*, p.6). In these circumstances, I had to make some choices.

Throughout this article, Ryujin is the king of the Ningyo, an immortal being that has lead his people since the Sundering, and I introduce Washuki as the Orochi leader. The great dragon made of coral that the Crab believe to be Ryujin is in fact Washuki, seen on one of the rare occasions when he was defending the secretive Ningyo.

When beyond the telepathic range, only the sub-vocalizations are effective. These sounds can be heard underwater over very long distances (up to a number of miles equal to the emitter's Water ring), but can convey only simple messages. Typically, a Ningyo would use a powerful "cry" to alert his kinsmen of danger, tell them to hide, or call them to his rescue. Humans are unable to hear these sounds.

The Ningyo's telepathic ability, to the humans, resembles the way Naga communicate through the Akasha, and many mistakenly think they are the same thing, in the process attributing the Ningyo a hive-mind similar to the Naga Akasha. The Ningyo purposely do nothing to correct this misconception, as it is sometimes enough to scare a human from harming a Ningyo if he thinks the whole race is seeing him through the eyes of his potential victim.

To confuse the matter further, the limited telepathic ability of the Ningyo does have similarities with the Naga's, as well as with some other spirits (the Orochi in particular). This allows these races to communicate very easily underwater, and has undoubtedly been a major contributing factor to the alliances the Ningyo have established with them.

Alliances

Although very few humans know about this, the Ningyo are allied with two powerful races: the Orochi and the Naga.

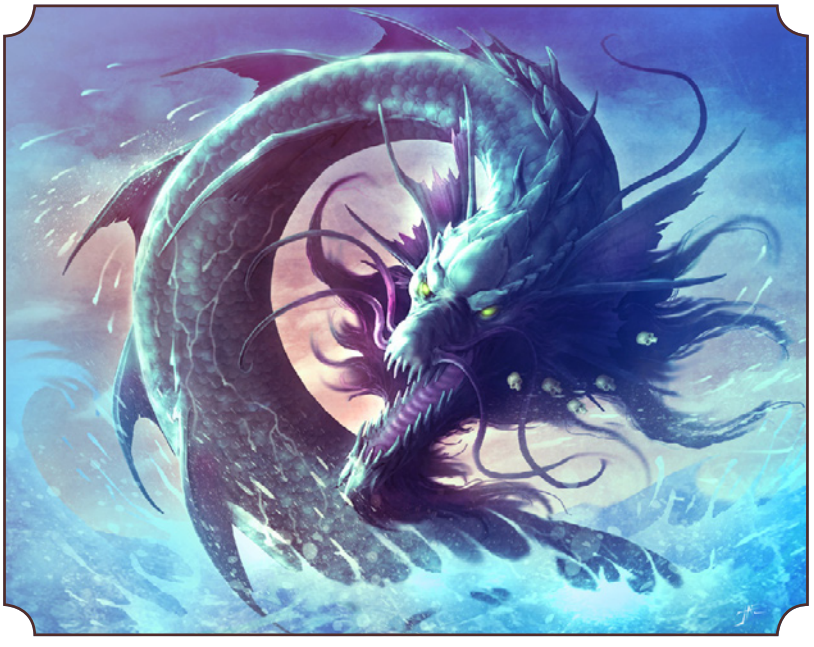
Orochi

The alliance with the Orochi came to be in a fairly straightforward manner, as it was created as an answer to the needs of both parties a very long time ago, after the Sundering, but before the appearance of the Naga. The solemn Orochi, tired of the pranks of the other denizens of Sakkaku, wanted to leave and find some quiet place for themselves. The tricks and jokes of the mujina were essentially harmless to the great Orochi, but their lack of humor and patience made each of these irritating beyond imagination, which undoubtedly fueled the mujina's determination to take risks and defy the giant serpents. Desperate to find some measure of peace, they sought allies in other realms.

The powerful king of the Ningyo, Ryujin, answered the call. In the years that followed the fall of the five races alliance, the Ningyo's feeling of insecurity was at a peak. They had severed themselves from the other races, ensuring none would betray them, but in doing so they had also lost the protection that alliance with strong races such as the Trolls and the Kitsu had granted them. At the same time, the Ningyo race had to face the threat of the Sundered. Ryujin saw an opportunity and traveled to Sakkaku to meet with the Orochi's leader, Washuki.

The terms of the agreement were simple: Ryujin and his people would provide the means for the Orochi to cross over to Ningen-do, and offer them a place to regroup and enjoy their newfound peace. In exchange, the Orochi swore to use their might to protect the Ningyo against anyone who would dare threaten them (including the Sundered). Ryujin selected his 88 best Ningyo mages, and it took almost fifty years to grow a pearl portal bridging Sakkaku to Ningen-do that would be large enough to accommodate the Orochi's sizeable frame. However, to both the long-lived creatures, it did not seem that long to wait. The giant scallop in which the portal was created was even bigger, and it is said that the massive seashell used as the roof over the Altar of the Ningyo-Orochi Alliance, in Candas, is actually one half of that legendary shellfish.

After the portal was erected and the rituals finished, the Orochi were finally able to cross over to Ningen-do. This process took several difficult weeks, as the portal had to be kept open continuously while the 88 Ningyo mages, aided by the first few Orochi that passed through it, had to repel the many kappa and some hardy mujina that attempted to get a free passage to the Realm of Mortals. As the days passed, the Ningyo mages grew weaker and weaker, until they began to die from exhaustion and the magical backlash created by the arrival of each Orochi. But their resolve didn't waver, keenly aware as they were of the importance of the gift they were offering to their people. Eventually, the last surviving Ningyo mage sensed his coming end. He kept the portal open long enough for one last Orochi to come through, and in his dying moment, he sealed the portal. Not all the Orochi, particularly younger ones, reached the portal in time, but many had been fast enough. As the portal closed, a final wave of power shattered it, ensuring no one would ever use it again. Until the last minute, there was always the possibility that the Orochi, denizens of the Realm of



Mischief, would not respect their part of the agreement. But, impressed and moved by the Ningyo's sacrifice, the Orochi's loyalty was forever acquired. Even though they remain in bondage to the Ningyo, many consider it a point of pride to honor the pact.

All the fragments of the portal were meticulously collected, as they hold a strong bond to the Orochi and may be used to call them and bind them to one's will. This is a secret kept very carefully as both allies understand the inherent danger it poses to them, should another race learn about it. The Ningyo are particularly wary of the Mantis humans and their Storm Riders, as it stands to reason that such fragments could be used to quicken and strengthen the bond between the human and the young Orochi. The Orochi feel for their brethren still trapped in Sakkaku, but do not wish them to trade servitude for passage to Ningen-do for, as they did.

In recognition to their stalwart defense of the Ningyo, Ryujin recently began to make concessions to the Orochi, allowing them to keep all the treasures and souls found aboard the ships they sink.

Naga

The relationship with the Naga is very different from that with the Orochi. It began when some amphibious scouts of the young Naga race explored the waterways and seas of the world, extending the borders of the nascent Naga kingdom. At that time, the Ningyo had already completed their transition to fully aquatic creatures. At first, it was fairly easy for the Ningyo to conceal their cities from the Naga, and they could observe this new race from a distance. Eventually, it became clear that the Ningyo and the Naga shared many traits: both were essentially peaceful races, they had the same interest in art—pearls in particular, they possessed a remarkably similar telepathic form of communication, and both races were afflicted with the burden of degenerate kinfolks (though only later did the Ningyo understand the difference between their Sundered and the Naga abominations).

Regardless, the reclusive Ningyo tried to keep their distance from the Naga as long as they could. Over the centuries, though, the Naga became more and more numerous, and unknowingly encroached on Ningyo territory. The Naga soon encountered the Sundered, gave no more thought to these primitive tribes than they had to the remnants of the trolls. Finally, Ryujin knew he would be forced to reveal the existence of the Ningyo civilization to the Naga, believing he would need to choose either a war against the Naga, or an alliance to share the resources of the seas.

Ryujin never had to decide which way to go, as a pivotal event sealed the friendship between the Ningyo and the Naga. Some legends describe the monster as a giant black spider with a thousand red eyes, others speak of an army of undead Ningyo, and others of an enormous slithering salamander demon with eight heads and eight tails. But all legends agree that the monster attacked the capital city of the Ningyo kingdom, dissipating its illusionary defenses in the process. The battle was hard and even the united might of Ryujin and the Orochi appeared insufficient to slay the beast. When all hope seemed lost, a battalion of Naga warriors came to join the fight and their combined force eventually defeated the great monster.

The cost of victory was high for all involved. Many Ningyo, Orochi and Naga died battling the beast, and even after its death, its Tainted carcass corrupted the ground of the Ningyo city, reducing to ruin the once magnificent capital. The battle was a startling eye-opener for the Ningyo: even though they had tried to cut themselves off from the world, external dangers could still reach their homes, and as they learned from the Naga, such corrupted monsters were becoming more common every day. The Ningyo understood that the world was changing again, and they had to adapt themselves. Their Orochi servants were mighty, but not that numerous and thus could not protect them all at all times. The Naga had come because they had been tracking the beast for a while, determined to destroy it and end the corruption it left in its wake. The commotion of the battle finally allowed the Naga to find the monster and join the fight. The Ningyo were impressed by the selflessness of the Naga and their resolve to combat the Foul, as they called it, everywhere it went. Maybe there was something good left in the world after all.

To the Naga as well, the discovery of the hidden Ningyo civilization was a big surprise. For the first time, they had encountered a people sharing their level of sophistication. The Naga had just started to explore the seas, and their endeavor would be made much easier and faster if they could convince the Ningyo to share their intimate knowledge of the oceans and waterways of the world. They had also witnessed some interesting feats of water and pearl magic during the fight, and they knew an interracial collaboration in these domains would certainly

prove very beneficial to both parties, the Naga having a few tricks of their own.

Eventually, Ryujin met with the Shimizaar, a Chameleon emissary of the Qatol. It was decided to reestablish the Ningyo capital city at a new location, and it would be rebuilt by both Ningyo and Naga, who would then share it as a symbol of their new friendship. This is how the underwater city of Candas, capital of two peoples, came to be. The Naga cemented the alliance with the promise to never reveal the existence of the more evolved Ningyo to anyone.

In the following centuries, the Ningyo worked alongside the Naga at a level of cooperation unseen since the time of the five races' alliance. Some were wary of being betrayed again, and on a few occasions, the friendship between Ningyo and Naga was tested. But eventually, it only became stronger as a result, and each race soon saw the other as an equal. Many magical discoveries were made during this new golden age of the Ningyo that lasted nearly 600 years, until the Naga entered their Great Sleep for the first time.

When the Great Sleep came, it was with much regret that the Ningyo saw their Naga friends withdraw from the world. They promised to their Naga allies that they would keep watch over their sleeping bodies for as long as necessary, keeping them safe from the threats of time and predators. The Ningyo rejoiced when the Naga awoke some time before the Second Day of Thunder, and simply resumed their vigilant watch when the Naga went back to sleep a few years later.

Humans

Besides the Orochi and the Naga, it should be noted that a few Ningyo have recently established contact with some samurai of the Mantis Clan. These contacts are always initiated by curious young individuals and in no way reflect a change of heart of the Ningyo society towards humans. Shizuko, Sasada, and more recently Sakarah, are the most famous of these intrepid explorers.

Shizuko is one of the rare Sundered Ningyo that was born much smarter than the average. He knew that the stigma of the Sundered would never allow him to rejoin the rest of the Ningyo civilization, and in any case he didn't have much inclination to do so. He decided instead to try his luck with the humans, and received a mixed welcome among the sailors of the Mantis Clan. At first, they tried to chase him away, concerned that he might try to steal from them. But his doggedness eventually paid off, and a crew made him their mascot.

Sasada's involvement with the Mantis Clan has a much different origin. He was sent to observe the developments of the Storm Riders and their bond with the Orochi. Ryujin was concerned that this new possibility for Orochi to escape Sakkaku could create trouble with his servant Orochi, and the Orochi themselves were curious about this situation. It wasn't difficult for Sasada to gain acceptance from the Mantis Clan: he simply came to the Storm Riders with an Orochi of his own. Curious about such an occurrence, they took him in, with the intention to learn his secret. Little did they know that it was Sasada who was spying on them. He made sure to always appear less intelligent than he really was, maintaining the charade that protects his people's safety. Eventually, the sensei of Tempest Island decided that the risks associated with the summoning and binding of young Orochi were too high to continue this practice. At this point, Sasada and his Orochi simply disappeared and returned to Candas.

Sakarah is a Ningyo warrior of the Hidden Civilization whose hunting party sensed the arrival of the Thunder Dragon. Exiled from Tengoku by the other dragons and rendered mortal, the Thunder Dragon had been cast down to Ningen-do, and had landed in the great Eastern ocean of Rokugan. Yoritomo Naizen, thanks to the Helm of Thunder that is in his possession, was the first human to learn about the dragon's fate. He set a large fleet to meet with it and offer protection while it was recovering its strength. Sakarah and his followers believe that the Thunder Dragon is the Avatar of the Spawn Father, the mythical progenitor of the Ningyo race, and joined with the Mantis to protect it out of the great respect they have for the Spawn Father and its power. Although Sakarah has been accepted by the Mantis Clan, he does not answer questions about his race or the whereabouts of the rest of the Ningyo. The truth is that not all Ningyo share Sakarah's certainty about the Thunder Dragon's status as avatar of the Spawn Father, especially since some question the veracity of the myths. Consequently,

Sakarah's sect has received little support from the other Ningyo, who view them as excentrics at best, and reckless fanatics at worst.

There is another clan with which the Ningyo interact: the Dragon Clan. The Ningyo at the Golden Tower established friendship with the Dragon after Kitsuki Tadashi's intervention to help them when they were under siege by pirates. In return for the help, the Ningyo offered part of their treasures and some rare insight into Ningyo history and magic. However, shortly after Tadashi's return to collect the Ningyo's reward, they decided their debt was paid and they became more and more reluctant to accept the inquisitive human amid them. At the Ningyo's request, the place where the Dragon emissary and the Ningyo would meet for the occasional trade was changed to a neutral location on the Phoenix coast. Sometime later, the Golden Tower disappeared as mysteriously as it had appeared. Despite encouraging initial prospects, the Dragon Clan did not receive much benefit from this friendship. This is simply due to the fact that the lands of the Dragon are mostly mountainous, and the Ningyo have almost no means to help the clan from their city in the sea. On the other hand, this basic alliance has proved to the Ningyo that not all humans are duplicitous and dangerous. Only the future will tell if the reclusive Ningyo will decide to take a more active role in the affairs of Rokugan.

Peaceful cohabitation with humans is possible, as the village of Mizu Mura in Unicorn lands can attest, but whenever it has happened, it was made possible by the many offerings humans left for the Ningyo, and an absolute respect for their wish to remain unseen and undisturbed.

The Ningyo Life Cycle

Before the Sundering, an average Ningyo could live up to 100 years. All things considered, when compared with the other races of the alliance, this was fairly short. But inexplicably, the Sundering conferred all Ningyo immunity to age. There was a price to pay for this immortality, as they soon learned: the vast majority of their eggs were now infertile and the cycle of reincarnation was broken (on this latter topic, see the chapter on the Soul-Pearls below). Before the cataclysm, a female Ningyo would lay about a hundred eggs in her life, at least a fifth of which would be fertile. Now, only a few Ningyo are born each generation.

A Ningyo egg looks exactly like a big bluish pearl (about one inch in diameter). A few days after mating, the female will lay her eggs (about ten at a time) in live giant clams, where they will mature for a year. Ningyo nurseries consist of hundreds of rotund giant clams littering the seafloor under warm shallow waters. They are extremely important to the Ningyo, and are protected accordingly. It has become increasingly difficult to find a proper location that would provide all the elements necessary to raise the eggs, notably because of human interlopers that seem eager to claim every length of shores for themselves, no matter how secluded. Whenever humans have found a Ningyo nursery, they have destroyed it and pillaged it for its pearl-like eggs and the flesh of the giant clams (this flesh, called himejako, is considered a delicacy by the samurai), further fueling the distrust and resentment the Ningyo harbor against humanity.

The young Ningyo, fresh from the egg, is born without arms and is only a couple inches long. He will immediately be transferred in an empty seashell in which it will stay for three or four more months, during which the several Ningyo in charge of the nursery will feed him with fresh fish and mollusks to sustain his rapid growth. At the last stage of its infant phase, the young Ningyo will finally grow limbs. At this point the seashell has likely become too small for the Ningyo, and the child will emerge to the open waters for the first time. The barren eggs left in the shells are regularly collected by the nurses, as they have now become regular pearls and they will later be used to create Soul Pearls—a kind of nemuranai essential to the preservation of the Ningyo race.

Over the next several years, the young Ningyo will be collectively raised by nurses, and taught by scholars and mages in the ways of their race. They will gain the knowledge and skills necessary for their survival in the waters of Rokugan while remaining protected in the confines of the Ningyo cities. Young Ningyo that show the marks of the Sundered are kept aside from others, for the safety of all, and often escape to join the wild Ningyo when they are in their early teens. Eventually, the end of childhood traditionally comes when they first manifest their natural ability to produce venom from their fangs (usually around the age of 15).

Young adults are formally inducted into Ningyo society after a coming of age ceremony. Unlike most other Ningyo celebrations that tend to be communal events involving the whole race on the same days every year, this ceremony occurs when the individual is ready and involves only his mentors and parents. It is quite different from the Rokugani gempukku, as there are no tests of any sort, only recitation of Ningyo precepts which conclude with a solemn oath to protect the race's secret with one's own life. The oath is sworn with the help of a mage, who binds it with a stone that will be kept in the vaults of the Ningyo. Each stone is unique, and will glow in warning if the oath is broken, allowing the Ningyo to prepare for the worst if that happens. After the ceremony, young Ningyo are considered adults and allowed to seek their own path. It is usually soon after this that the most daring young ones test their mettle and luck by taunting sailors.

The Ningyo will then continue to age until he reaches the apex of his intellectual and physical growth (in his mid-forties), at which point he will start aging at a much reduced pace. At 100 he would look like he is 50, at 200 like he is 60, and beyond 300 he would forever look like he is about 65.

It should be noted that even though Ningyo can breathe equally well in seawater and freshwater, they will always favor the environment in which they were born. As a result, the river and lake Ningyo have come to appear slightly different from their sea cousins. Freshwater Ningyo tend to be a bit smaller but heavily-built, with a thicker layer of mucus protecting their body. Their scales

are wider, similar to those of a large carp, and their colors range from pearly white to brownish green, with the occasional spot or stripe of yellow or red. In contrast, the sea-dwelling Ningyo are more slender and elegant looking. Their fine scales are closely meshed together, usually of a bright emerald green or turquoise, adorned with intricate colored patterns that use the whole rainbow spectrum.

Society & Customs

When discussing the Ningyo society, it is important to make the distinction between the Sundered tribes and the hidden Ningyo civilization.

The Sundered

The less fortunate of the Ningyo who nearly lost their sapience after the Sundering are loosely organized in tribes, also known as schools. A typical tribe consists of an experienced leader followed by 20 to 50 Ningyo. Internal rivalries usually cause groups larger than 50 to splinter, with a strong Ningyo leading a small band away to set up a tribe of his own. The tribe leader usually obtained his dominant position either by taking advantage of a relatively superior intellect and wisdom, or by sheer strength (either physical or magical). Leadership is renewed whenever a younger member challenges his elder and defeats him. The rules of such duels are specific to each Ningyo leader, who sets rules that favor his own strengths. Duels are rarely to the death; indeed, when the challenger wins and becomes the new leader, he often keeps the defeated Ningyo as an advisor. However, it occasionally happens that a ruthless Ningyo simply murders the leader and claims the vacant position for himself.

Each Sundered school has its particular sub-vocalized call that it uses to identify itself to other nearby schools. The call is often employed to indicate to other schools that a particular area has been claimed by a tribe.

The tribes follow a nomadic lifestyle. They build temporary shelter or, if they are lucky enough, take refuge in natural havens such as underwater grottoes. Sometimes, a tribe feels strong enough to challenge a Ningyo settlement, chasing away the inhabitants to claim the building for themselves. Such conquest rarely ends well for the Sundered, but it seems they have short memories, as the attacks continue to occur periodically. In any case, a school rarely remains at the same location longer than a year—the time needed for an egg to mature in a giant clam. As soon as the food supply grows scarce, they move on to another spot, carrying the few newborns with them in large pouches.

The Hidden Civilization

The true Ningyo civilization is much more organized, with a clearly defined—if somewhat fluid—hierarchy. At the top, sitting on the Pearl Throne in Candas having reigned for over two thousands years, is Ryujin. He was the king of the Ningyo at the time of the Sundering, and he hadn't expected to lead for so long. He has, however, risen to the challenge brilliantly, guiding his people with strength and wisdom over the years. Ryujin had nine children at the time of the Sundering, six of whom are still alive today (Tsamaru, his youngest daugther, chose to become human and married Shiba-kami; after her death, her body was placed in the Heavens where she is now the brightest star). They each rule over one of the other major Ningyo cities. Apparently condemned to forever remain only princes and princesses, the elder children have grown bitter. Rumors among the Ningyo say that the crown prince Ryusho has not been on speaking terms with his father for over a thousand years, and that he his governing Naya, the second largest Ningyo city located off the Phoenix coast,

Tsamaru, Ningyo Princess and wife of Shiba

as his own small kingdom. Similarly, princess Baoko has declared herself queen of Yonden, another important Ningyo city located at the bottom of White Shore Lake (in Unicorn territory). Ryujin is unconcerned by these petty disloyalties. He believes that peace among the Ningyo is more important than unity, and he is convinced that, should a major threat appear, all his children would put aside their pride and join with him again to defend the Ningyo. A few centuries ago, Ryujin preemptively offered to let his four other children to administer their domains as independent principalities under the lenient control of the Pearl Throne. All eagerly accepted, save for Shujin, the youngest son, who remains fiercely loyal to his father. Shujin rules Devanam, a modest Ningyo settlement under Cherry Blossom Snow Lake.

Just below the hereditary royalty and its troubled family is the noble class. Unlike Rokugani nobility, which is inherited, the nobles of the Ningyo must prove they deserve a place among the elite. The Ningyo society is divided in castes, all theoretically equal to the others, although some castes are more respected than others (the Wave Mages and the Tidal Warriors, for instance, are among the most prestigious castes). A caste is made of all the Ningyo who share the same profession or calling, so that one is not born into a caste, but chooses one upon becoming an adult (on condition that he meets the requirements of the caste). Each caste is then subdivided geographically into guilds. For instance, the mage guild in Candas and the mage guild at the Golden Tower both belong to the Wave Mage caste. A leader is chosen for each guild. The means by which the choice is made depends of the caste. For the Wave Mages, for instance, it is a contest of magic held every century. The Pearlsmiths hold a pearl crafting contest every time a formal challenge is issued by a contender, and the Tidal Warriors' leaders obtain their position in a martial contest held every twenty years. All these leaders form the Ningyo nobility and are honored as such.

Finally, the mass of the Ningyo society is made of commoners. The gap between the commoners and the nobles is not impossible to cross, as all nobles hail from the commoners and return there when deposed by a more skilled contender. Even though the nobles are honored as the Ningyo elite, there is a great amount of respect between both social classes. Consequently, there are no taboos or social rules governing interactions between them, and it is extremely difficult for a non-Ningyo to recognize a noble from a commoner outside of formal events.

There is no equivalent of the eta in Ningyo society. The only bias that sometimes shows up is between the stocky freshwater Ningyo and the slender seawater Ningyo. Some of the former consider the latter to be frail and arrogant, while the latter consider the former to be rustic and oafish. The truth is, the freshwater Ningyo are much closer and more exposed to human threats due to their landlocked habitat. Therefore, they must always be more cautious and combat-ready than the sea Ningyo. This constant wariness has affected the freshwater Ningyo's attitude towards the seawater Ningyo, who they regard as luckier and somewhat reckless.

Shared Values

All Ningyo, even the Sundered, share some common traits. For instance, even though elders are respected, this respect is nowhere as strong as it is in human society. This is explained by the simple fact that among immortals, a few centuries more or less are not that significant anymore. On the other hand, young Ningyo are the most cherished and protected members of the race. There are so few of them born every year that each is considered a marvel; a treasure to defend at all cost.

Shiny things are sought after by all Ningyo. Mundane pearls and mother-of-pearl are commonly used for decoration. Crystals or even colored glass beads from the Ivory Kingdoms are considered very precious. The most coveted items are made of gold. Since Ningyo are usually unable to perform metal smithing, gold and silver items (jewelry in particular) are reserved for the most influential of the nobles, or to the daring Ningyo that attack and sink human ships.

Finally, Ningyo have no religion per se. Even though the Fortunes already existed at the time of the five races alliance, the Ningyo never felt the need to worship them. Regardless, they acknowledge the Fortunes' power and wisdom and will not defy them or desecrate their temples. In fact, whenever the Ningyo show great deference to any god-like entity, it is often out of fearful respect for its power.

Such is the case for the Spawn Father, the mythical progenitor of the Ningyo race. The Ningyo creation myths have been mostly lost to the centuries, but the most powerful figure of the legends is the Spawn Father, who mated with the Ocean Mother, and produced the Ningyo. The Ocean Mother is simply a representation of Nature in these myths, devoid of intelligence, and it is why only the Spawn Father, who sowed the seeds of life, is respected by contemporary Ningyo. Sakarah and his followers believe the fallen Thunder Dragon to be the avatar of the Spawn Father. Whether the dragon is indeed the Ningyo ancestor or not, it is an extremely powerful entity, and so entitled to their utmost respect.

The elemental kami are treated differently: although they are not truly worshipped either, the Ningyo consider their friendship an integral part of existence. In particular, the Water kami are central to the Ningyo's society and magic, and as such are the most respected and cherished of the elemental kami. The Ningyo collectively call them Mizu-no-Kami. Shrines to the Water kami are a common sight in Ningyo cities, but they should not be mistaken for places of worship. The Ningyo build these monuments in honor of the kami, to recognize their long friendship and mutual respect, or even sometimes as payment in return for some great service the kami have done.

Art & Tools

Despite their ability to navigate unhindered even in absolute darkness, the Ningyo have not forsaken light and the colors of the worlds. Long before the Sundering, in collaboration with the other races, they created sophisticated forms of art, including painting and weaving (with

the Kitsu), sculpture and pottery (with the Zokujin), but also other more practical crafts such as weapon smithing or armor crafting (with the help of the Zokujin, the Kenku and the Trolls). Notably, the Ningyo did not take part in crafting the magical crystals that the five races made extensive use of in their works: the temperatures necessary to perform sand and crystal smithing were too high for the Ningyo's physiology, forbidding them to help in their production, although they participated in the rituals that granted the items magical properties. Since the Sundering, no Ningyo has performed crystal smithing, and all crystal items they subsequently acquired have been gifts from their Naga allies or "salvaged" from sunken ships. Consequently, this ancient art has been completely forgotten by the Ningyo.

Art

When the Ningyo retreated under the waves, they took with them many of their favorite items and artworks, and their taste for artistic creation did not diminish. Unfortunately, most of the items were not designed to be kept in an aquatic environment. Worse, the absolute darkness that reigns in the depths prevented the Ningyo from enjoying the sight of some artworks, in particular scrolls of paintings and poetry. These problems were quickly solved with the creation of dry rooms specifically designed to preserve the delicate items underwater. Each Ningyo city has at least one such place, known as *wor-sheel* (vault of light), and most influential families have a small room in their home for the same purpose. The communal vaults combine the functions of museum, library, and hoarding place. In general, these rooms consist of an airtight space, usually shaped in a low dome, filled with air and accessible by a central well connected to the rest of the submerged building. These structures could not exist without magic, as the kami are entreated to keep the air dry and fresh and the walls strong enough to resist the pressure. Inside, the walls are encrusted with mother-of-pearl enchanted to glow an iridescent white light, and bioluminescent blue flowers known as *ellaes* are grown on the pond's surface, providing additional light. The few human scholars who have seen ellaes call them the Ningyo lotus for their similarity with this flower. There are only a handful of Ningyo engineers that know the rituals necessary to create a vault of light and have the power to perform them. Thus, only the most valuable and beautiful items are deposited in a vault, such as delicate paintings, collections of scrolls dating from before the Sundering, jewelry, etc. When a Rokugani thief imagines the sunken treasures of the Ningyo, it is of the vaults of light that he is dreaming.

The Ningyo are very fond of shiny things and the way they reflect light. They mine many different precious stones in their submerged excavations and some Ningyo are expert gem cutters. They use mundane pearls as currency. Gold is also of enormous value to the Ningyo because this metal does not rust, but also because they are usually unable to melt and work it underwater, so that virtually every gold item they own is either a gift, or procured through trade or theft.

Tools

Obviously, an underwater environment is not suitable for working metals in the traditional ways. Magic could bring metal to the necessary temperature to forge it, but it would also heat the water around to boiling levels, which is something that no Ningyo could survive. To replace their metal tools, the Ningyo have developed pearlsmithing.

Pearlsmithing is a combination of conventional pearl culture skills and very specific magic. Although not all Ningyo can perform basic pearlsmithing, it is a common ability. By placing carefully designed catalysts in a seashell, the Ningyo can begin the process of growing an item. Gradually, the pearl item is refined, reshaped, until it reaches the desired raw form. Then, a pearlsmith carves, polishes and sharpens the item to give it its final shape. At this point the item is given to a master pearlsmith who knows the spells required to harden the pearl and make the item as resilient as steel. This is a lengthy process, despite the innate Ningyo magic that shortens it significantly, and small items can easily take a few months, while larger or more intricate ones may take years. The Ningyo have all the time in the world, though, so it does not seem to bother them, and expert pearlsmiths are able to simultaneously grow dozens of items.

For all the more mundane tools, Ningyo artisans make use of material such as coral, seashells, and flint stone. Rope and thread are made from tough ligneous brown algae found in deep trenches, known as ennil (saltwood), the biggest of which can grow as tall and hard as a tree. Planks and beams made out of giant ennil are extremely resilient and are commonly used in Ningyo construction. However, if left out of water for longer than a few days, the saltwood dries and becomes very brittle, permanently ruined.

A few Ningyo have taken upon themselves to continue their swordsmithing tradition from before the Sundering.

Ningyo Pearl Weapons

Pearl weapons are not as pure and as efficient against Oni and other Tainted creatures as jade or crystal. However, due to their inherently magical nature, they are slightly better than regular steel weapons. Pearl weapons can inflict damage to creatures immune to normal weapons but vulnerable to either jade or crystal. However, the damage is only equal to half the total rolled (rounded down; i.e. if damage rolled is 27, only 13 wounds are inflicted). If the opponent has Carapace, the Carapace rating is halved (again, rounded down; i.e. Carapace 5 becomes Carapace 2).

There are only five of them left today, and all work in the only underwater forge of the Ningyo kingdom: Green Flame Forge, in Candas. Shortly after Candas was jointly built by Naga and Ningyo, the Chameleon expressed their desire to continue metalsmithing in their new home. Green Flame Forge was built on the same principles as the vaults of light, with the help of several Naga jakla and Ningyo mages, and constitutes a singular marvel of stone and magic. All the Ningyo artisans that have ever worked in Green Flame Forge have also been very talented mages, as they must be able to cast the spells that will allow them to survive in the hot and steamy air of the forge, and of course to allow them to breathe out of water. It is in Green Flame Forge that the ancestral sword of the Phoenix, Ofushikai, was created by the legendary Ningyo mage swordsmith Naraigoran.

The Soul-Pearls

The five races were all born from the Realm of Mortals, but soon discovered the existence of other realms. When they did, it fanned the fires of their curiosity and they focused many of their magical experiments on creating portals to other realms. Few of their creations endured, but Oblivion's Gate in Volturnum, their banishing of a whole group of Kitsu to Toshigoku, or the powerful artifact that was in the City of Night can all attest of their undeniable expertise about the spirit realms and how to move between them.

Before the Sundering, it was very difficult to travel from one realm to the other. All passages had to be crafted, none was natural. Even the Taint of Jigoku had limited hold on Ningen-do: when it found its way there, it was only temporary, as it would slowly fade away. The five races were not entirely conscious that their magical experimentations rendered the veil between the realms much thinner. The Sundering's shockwave echoed throughout all the spirit realms, further weakening the veil and bringing the realms even closer. The Ningyo understand this, and some wonder if the five races' arrogance is not what allowed Jigoku to reach for Fu Leng when he fell, creating a permanent portal to that evil realm in the process, the Festering Pit. This unspoken guilt explains why the Ningyo have almost completely stopped using magic designed to open passages or travel between realms. The latest use of such magic occurred over two millennia ago, when they built the pearl gate bridging Sakkaku to Ningen-do for the Orochi.

It is thus by chance that the Ningyo eventually learned of the fate reserved to the souls of their deceased. Some time after their alliance with the Naga, a jakla informed the Ningyo of a startling discovery he made while studying Chikushudo: some spirits living there were actually Ningyo souls. This fact had not been immediately apparent, because the Ningyo in Chikushudo were devoid of any intelligence, reduced to mere beasts roaming the waterways of the Realms of Animals. Even their appearance had changed: they had only stumps with long fins where they used to have arms, and their faces were much more fish-like. After some more time studying the anomaly with the Naga's help, the Ningyo finally understood the true nature of the Sundering's effect on their race: the cataclysm had somehow partially shifted their essence, the very fabric of their souls, out of Ningen-do, and into Chikushudo. This was how they had gained immortality, but also how the Sundered had been created (their soul was anchored more in Chikushudo than in Ningen-do), and why so few new Ningyo are born.

When an accident or an attack resulted in the death of a Ningyo, his soul would not go to Meido, waiting for reincarnation, as it had always done. Instead, it traveled to Chikushudo, and when it would die there, it would reincarnate in Ningen-do as an animal, forever severed from the Ningyo race.

The Ningyo were horrified; their race was truly dying, their civilization slowly but surely being wiped out of existence. Fortunately, they were not defenseless against this fate. They did not know how to shift back completely to Ningen-do, but they eventually designed, in collaboration with Naga jakla, a means to stop a soul from going to Chikushudo: the Soul-pearls.

A Soul-Pearl is an enchanted Ningyo pearl (one of their barren eggs) that is bound to a living Ningyo's soul. When that individual passes away for any reason, his soul is anchored in Ningen-do by the pearl, unable to move out of the realm. Eventually, the pearl will bond with another Ningyo of the same blood line (usually a close family member) and the soul contained within is fused with the soul of the living Ningyo, granting him access to the knowledge and memories of the dead Ningyo. It is the very same magic that was refined and adapted to a Kami's soul by Naraigoran when he created the Phoenix's sword. Nowadays, about one in four living Ningyo is also a host for one of their ancestors. The immortal king Ryujin's Soul-Pearl is affixed to the front of his crown, symbol of his royal status, and he has already gone through three different hosts since the Sundering.

Unfortunately for the Sundered, their rift with the rest of the Ningyo means that they do not have access to this complex pearl magic. When one of them dies (which happens more frequently due to their more exposed lives), his soul is forever lost to the Ningyo. The Ningyo have significantly slowed the extinction of their race, but it is still going on, and they are desperate to find a solution to their affliction.

The Taint

One of the most important types of pearl magic the Ningyo learned from the Naga is the ritual that forever protects them from the Taint. All Ningyo submit themselves to this excruciating process soon after their coming-of-age ceremony. Unfortunately, this is another benefit from the Ningyo civilization that the Sundered do not have access to. These rituals are painful for the tough Naga, and for the frailer Ningyo, they can be agonizing. So much so that a rare few actually die during the process, but it is a risk accepted by all.

Indeed, they have seen what the Taint does to the unprotected Sundered Ningyo, and the horrible transformation that afflicts those touched by Jigoku. Even the semi-feral Sundered Ningyo understand the threat of

Taint, and any member of their tribe that is corrupted is immediately killed. However, most of those that are aware of their condition flee the school before others detect it. They invariably find their way to one of the Koujin tribes.

For some unknown reason, most Tainted Ningyo—those who do not end up devoured by the others—transform into a remarkably homogeneous monstrous form. Humans call them Koujin, the sharkmen, and they have no idea they were once Ningyo. Even the Ningyo, if asked about the Koujin, will strongly deny any relation to this vile race.

The physical transformation leaves little of their former selves. The Koujin's head looks like a giant shark's head fused into the chest of a Ningyo, complete with a large shark fin beginning at the back of the head and ending just bellow the shoulder blades. The Koujin's skin is rough and grey-blue from head to tail; his eyes are two small red orbs. The head is so disproportionately big that it makes the brawny body seem small in contrast, and forces the Koujin into a stooped, hunch-backed posture when it walks. The Koujin is a water breathing creature, but it can breathe air for short periods (a couple hours maximum). When it goes on land, usually to attack and pillage fishermen villages, it can grow two wiry legs that would normally seem unable to support the weight. Watching a crooked Koujin walking would be amusing if they were not so dangerous.

The transformation reduces the Koujin's mind to that of a dangerous predatory animal. They have no language save some grunts and groans, but seem able to build primitive weapons out of saltwood and stone. They are exclusively carnivorous and particularly enjoy devouring human and Ningyo flesh (the Ningyo curse has no effect on them, as they are Ningyo themselves). They have a strange compulsion to drink sake whenever they can find some, and this weakness has often meant salvation for fishermen because even with as little sake as the content of a cup, a Koujin becomes completely inebriated, forgetting its feeding frenzy and reveling in simple destruction of anything in sight, with little discernment. Coastal villages know this and often keep a barrel of sake in case of Koujin attack: while the Koujin are drunk, the villagers can safely flee and return a few hours later when the bored Koujin are gone. They will have to rebuild their houses, but it is a smaller price to pay than being slaughtered.

Koujin groups usually number between five to ten members. They are encountered most often while traveling on the Sea of Shadows or on its shores, but occasional Koujin attacks have been recorded all along the eastern Rokugani coast, with higher frequency in the warmer waters of the Mantis archipelago and the southern seas. In addition to their extremely dangerous bite, the Koujin favor the use of two- or three-pronged harpoon-like spears (DR: 1k2). Unlike their former brethren, Koujin live exclusively in seawater and are unable to survive for longer than a few hours in rivers.

There is a rumor among Ningyo affirming that prince Shuryoshin (one of the three dead children of Ryujin), who died in battle against the great beast that destroyed

Koujin

Air: 1	Earth: 2	Fire: 1	Water: 4
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 4	

Rolls When Attacking: 7k4
Rolls for Damage: 5k2 (spear) or 4k4 (bite)
TN to Be Hit: 20
Wounds per Level: 6
Shadowlands Taint: 2

Special: Carapace 2. Aquatic: May swim at their normal movement rate without a Skill Roll. Koujin breathe normally underwater and can breathe air for a short time (a number of hours equal to their Earth), after which they will suffocate. They are very good at remaining unseen while underwater and receive a +4k2 bonus to all Skill Rolls to avoid detection in water. **Dark Vision:** Koujin can see perfectly even in absolute darkness. They never suffer any Perception or attack penalties as a result of darkness. **Shark Jaws:** The Koujin can use their powerful jaws to inflict devastating damage to their preys. In addition to a regular melee attack (usually with a spear), the Koujin can make one bite attack per turn. **Compulsion:** Whenever a Koujin sees sake, he will do anything in his power to drink it, abandoning all other objectives. A Koujin may attempt to resist this compulsion by succeeding at a Raw Willpower Roll vs. TN 20. **Shugenja:** About 1 out of 5 Koujin has spellcasting abilities; treat them as Iuchi Shugenja with access to Maho spells.

the first Ningyo capital, is a Koujin. It is said that his body became corrupted by the Taint spreading from the slain monster's carcass, and he became the first Koujin. Somehow, he retained his intelligence, and he is now plotting the destruction of the Ningyo race from his palace deep in the Sea of Shadows.

Magical Abilities

The Ningyo are an inherently magical race. Virtually all Ningyo are able to ask the water kami to perform small favors for them, in a way that isn't very different from the Zokujin's innate ability to shape and manipulate metals and earth. However, only the shoqan, the Wave Mages of the Ningyo, have trained to cast more potent and diverse spells. Just like the Naga jakla, all Ningyo cast their spells through pearls.

Water Affinity

Almost all non-shoqan Ningyo can cast Water spells as if they were shugenja at a Rank equal to their Insight Rank (this includes Air spells that are considered to be Water spells for Ningyo—see the "Liquid Magic" box). These Ningyo may not cast spells with a Mastery Level above 3. They have no elemental Affinity, no shugenja school technique, and are unable to cast Air, Fire, Earth, and Void spells. They have a number of spell slots equal to their Water Ring plus their Insight Rank.

True Wave Mages are skilled spellcasters and are as proficient as any human shugenja. They are thus able to cast spells of any element. Shoqan use the same game mechanics (Affinity, Deficiency, and Technique) as Iuchi shugenja. The spells Nature's Touch and Heart of Nature, that they possess as innate abilities, are often used by Ningyo to befriend and train marine animals such as dolphins (as pets) or sharks (for defense).

Blessings and Curses of Chikushudo

Having a portion of their essence anchored in Chikushudo is not without some benefits for the Ningyo. Even though it condemns their race and civilization to a slow extinction, it also grants them immortality. There are two other major consequences: the rare occurrence of shapeshifting ability and the terrible curse the Ningyo had to place on themselves.

Ningyo Shapeshifters

A rare few Ningyo, called Joningyo by the rest of their race, possess the ability common to all Hengeyokai: shapeshifting. These individuals can shift from their normal Ningyo form to a human form, in which they lose all their normal racial abilities, save for their ability to breathe underwater. In human form, any part of their skin exposed to water instantly reverts to their normal Ningyo skin appearance, which is a shiny emerald green sheath of fine fish scale. As soon as the skin is dry, it returns to the appearance of normal human skin, but it is usually enough to quickly identify a Ningyo shapeshifter. The most famous of all Ningyo shapeshifters is unquestionably Tsamaru, who was the wife of Shiba-Kami, and the daughter of King Ryujin. She is also the only one who has ever renounced to her Ningyo form (and immortality), out of love for her husband, and although powerful Isawa magic was certainly involved, the details about how she did it remain unknown to this day.

Rules for playing a Joningyo PC are offered p.62-66.

Liquid Magic

The Ningyo are masters of illusion and disguise while in their element. They can also manipulate water instinctively, creating powerful currents to repel enemies or disturb silt and make water cloudy, for escaping or concealment. To reflect this, for the Ningyo and only while cast underwater, the following selection of Air spells are considered to be Water spells of the same Mastery Level for all purposes (they are cast using the caster's Water Ring, they benefit from the caster's Affinity for Water spells, they use a Water spell slot when cast, etc.). Obviously, although the mechanics are identical, any effect involving wind would be replaced by a similar effect using water currents or jets, and those spells would be known by different names by the Ningyo.
3E indicates spells found in L5R 3E/3ER rulebook, and P&T those found in *Prayers and Treasures*.

Mastery Level 1

Cloak of Night (3E)
Gathering Swirl (P&T)
Howl of Isora (P&T)
Know the Shadows (P&T)
Nature's Touch (3E)
Quiescence of Air (3E)
Request to Hato-no-Kami (calls a fish) (P&T)
Tempest of Air (3E)
Way of Deception (3E)

Mastery Level 2

Hidden Visage (3E)
Mists of Illusion (3E)
Winds of Aggression (P&T)

Mastery Level 3

Castle of Air (P&T)
The Eye Shall Not See (3E)
Gift of the Wind (P&T)
Mask of Wind (3E)
Summon Fog (3E)

Mastery Level 4

False Realm (3E)
Lady Moon's Legion (3E)
Wall of Air (3E)

Mastery Level 5

Command the Clouds (also affects the swell and weather on the surface) (3E)
Flight of the Dragonfly (P&T)
Slayer's Knives (3E)
Whirlwind (3E)

Mastery Level 6

The Wrath of Kaze-no-Kami (3E)

New Spells

Here is a selection of a few spells often utilized by Ningyo. Some of those are known only to the Ningyo.

Benevolence of Mizu-no-Kami
(Water - Mastery Level 1)

Duration: 1 day
Area of Effect: 1 target item
Range: Touch

This spell protects the target item from all normal damage it would suffer from exposure to water. The item will remain dry, even when immersed in water. Traveling shugenja often use this spell on their cloaks, ensuring total protection from rain, but the Ningyo also make frequent use of this spell when they wish to move delicate items in or out of a vault of light.
Special Raises: You may make 1 Raise to target another item. You may make 2 Raises to protect a large quantity of a single thing (for instance, protect stored grain from water damage during a flood). You may make 4 Raises to change the base duration to one month.

Darkness of the Depths
(Water - Mastery Level 2)

Duration: See text
Area of Effect: A sphere of [Water x5] feet radius
Range: 100'

This spell allows the Ningyo engaged in underwater combat to take full advantage of their ability to see in the dark. The spell renders all water within the area of effect as black as ink, plunging it in absolute darkness. The effect is instantaneous, but the darkened water slowly dissipates due to the local currents. In a body of water with little or no current, the effect can last as long as 5 minutes, but in strong currents, it would not last longer than 5 rounds.
Special Raises: You may make 1 Raise to increase the area of effect's radius by 5 feet.

Gift of Mizu-no-Kami
(Water - Mastery Level 3)

Duration: 1 day
Area of Effect: 1 target water-breathing living being
Range: Touch

This spell is a Ningyo secret spell. It is a specialized version of Way of Still Water, adapted to the Ningyo's particular needs. This spell creates and maintains a thin sheath of moisture all over the target's body, preventing dehydration of the skin, and allows the target to breathe, speak and move about in air freely. Ningyo moving on land with this spell appear as if they were sliding over an invisible cushion of water.
Special Raises: You may make 4 Raises (and only once for this effect) to cast this spell as an enchantment. If you do, the casting duration becomes 1 hour, the duration of the spell becomes permanent, and the area of effect becomes 1 small conch filled with seawater and sealed. The conch grants the effects of the spell to the wearer (who may be another person than you) as

long as he keeps it on himself. If the conch is destroyed or its content spilled, the enchantment is removed and will dissipate the next round. As long as the enchantment is intact, the number of your Water spell slots is reduced by one.

Grasp of Mizu-no-Kami
(Water - Mastery Level 3)

Duration: Full Concentration plus 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 target air-breathing living being
Range: Touch

This spell is a Ningyo secret spell. It can only be cast while underwater, and only on targets that are fully submerged. This spell forces water kami into the lungs of the target, effectively drowning him. When cast, and on every subsequent rounds the spell is maintained, the target suffers (1+X)k1 damage, where X is the number of rounds the target has already been drowning. Any action the target wishes to perform requires him to make a number of Raises equal to X, for no other benefit than being able to act while drowning. When the spell ends, assuming the target survived, he will violently cough out the Water kami. He will not take additional damage but he will be unable to act on his next turn unless he makes 4 Raises.
Special Raises: You may make 2 Raises (and only once for this effect), to change the range of the spell to 25'. You may make 2 Raises to target an additional person or creature within range.

Jaws of the Depths
(Water - Mastery Level 5)

Duration: Total Concentration
Area of Effect: 1 target person or creature
Range: 50'

This spell is a Ningyo secret spell. This spell can only be cast while underwater, and only on targets that are fully submerged. The target suffers the effects of water pressure as if it were at extreme depths. Every round, this spell inflicts XkX damage to the target, where X is your Water Ring plus 1. The target is immobilized in the grasp of the water kami, its TN to Be Hit reduced to a mere 5 plus armor, but may try and escape every round (after suffering damage) by succeeding in a Contested Water roll against you.
Special Raises: You may make 2 Raises to affect an additional target in range with this spell.

The Ningyo Curse

Any individual who eats Ningyo flesh becomes immune to all diseases and need no longer eat, drink or breathe. In addition, they cease aging entirely. However, they also must roll one die and look for the result on the following table to determine the effects of the curse.

1-2 – Curse of Air: Any time you attempt to speak, you can say nothing except to announce the hideous crime you have committed by wronging the Ningyo so. Any time another being speaks to you, the only words you hear are a wailing lament from the soul of the dead Ningyo.
3-4 – Curse of Earth: Your body becomes a tree, rooted in the soil where you stand. You will endure forever, like a mighty oak, forever aware of your surroundings.
5-6 – Curse of Fire: You do not gain the usual freedom from needing to eat or drink, but can no longer eat normal food. You are filled with a burning hunger and must feed on a particular substance (chosen by the Gamemaster) at least once a day to maintain your immortality. If you do not feed on this substance once a day, you immediately die. You know what this substance is as soon as the curse sets in, and you can sense its presence anywhere within one hundred feet.
7-8 – Curse of Water: You become a Ningyo. Unlike other immortals, you still need to breathe, but can only breathe water. You will immediately begin to suffocate unless you enter a body of water. Such an immortal will have a difficult time avoiding vengeful Orochi.
9-10 – Curse of the Void: Though you become immortal, you also become a hideous, mindless monster. The GM should select any creature from the L5R Third Edition rulebook, Creatures of Rokugan Third Edition, or another source. Your normal statistics are immediately replaced with those of this creature, and you become an NPC under the Gamemaster's control.

The Curse of the Ningyo

Some people in Rokugan believe that a mortal who eats the flesh of a Ningyo will gain immortality. They are right, though they are unaware that this immortality comes with a steep price.

Some time after the Ningyo made a deal with the Orochi, gaining the allegiance of this powerful race, Washuki, the leader of the Orochi, recognized the power that Ningyo flesh held. Bound by his oath of fealty, and being already quite immortal himself, Washuki had no wish to devour his peaceful allies, but he realized that many others would not share this opinion. If other races were aware of the power that resonated within Ningyo flesh, not even he could protect them for long.

So Washuki informed Ryujin of the situation, and together they placed a powerful curse upon the Ningyo race. For all time, any who dared to eat Ningyo flesh would receive the immortality they sought, but at a horrible price. Those few who have dared investigate whether the superstitions are true invariably face a horrible fate. To make matters even more difficult for those so accursed, any Orochi can see the marks of the curse on a mortal as clear as day. Such an accursed immortal is well advised to avoid large bodies of water, for the Orochi will never stop hunting anyone who performs the heinous act of killing a Ningyo simply to selfishly preserve themselves. See the Ningyo Curse boxed text for the mechanical aspects of this curse.

Washuki and Ryujin are the only two beings in the world who could lift the curse from an individual who ate Ningyo flesh, removing both the curse and the immortality. It seems only the two of them know of this, as no one ever petitioned them to do so. Even if someone did, the supplicant would need to have a very good reason for them to lift the curse, and they would certainly ask some difficult service or quest to be done in return for their clemency.

Locations

Anywhere there is a large body of water, the Ningyo can be found. Over centuries, they colonized all seas and rivers of Rokugan, and quite possibly beyond. Even underground rivers or lakes are suitable for Ningyo settlements. Only the Sea of Shadows has been carefully avoided since its creation.

Candas

Candas, the current capital city of the Ningyo kingdom and the homeland of the Naga Chameleon bloodline, is located beneath the warm waters of Rokugan's southern sea, about a day's swim off of the coast, somewhere between Yukami Mura and Shinden Asahina. Since the time of its joint construction with the Naga, Candas has always been the jewel of the Ningyo kingdom. Called the City of Freedom by the Naga and the City of Trust by the Ningyo, Candas was a prosperous city bubbling with activity when the Naga were awake, and has become somewhat quieter during their sleep. Half of the city was originally reserved for the Naga, but the city continued to expand over the centuries after they went to the Great Sleep. When the Chameleon awoke for a brief period in the 12th century, they were surprised to see that their half was now part of the Old City at the center of Candas, barely a quarter of the total area.

Candas is without contest the richest of the Ningyo cities, thanks to the vast sandy expanses on which prosper the pearl farms that surround it. Its white towers are encrusted with nacre, crystal and gold. Its vaults contain the most valuable of all the treasures the Ningyo have accumulated since its construction: gold, precious gems, pearls, but also invaluable pieces of art and scrolls of science, magic and literature from an olden age.

At the center of Candas is Ryujin's palace, where the King of the Ningyo seats on the pearl throne. Nearby is located the great Library of Candas, which holds texts

from both the Ningyo and the Naga, as well as some older books written in the Troll and Kitsu languages, dating from the time of the five races alliance. In the same area is the House of Trust, which consists of two monuments: the Altar of the Ningyo-Orochi Alliance, and the Shrine of the Ningyo-Naga Friendship.

The most prominent feature of the city is the Naga quarter. There lay the sleeping Chameleon, resting in their homes and temples, waiting for the day Destiny will call them to battle again. This area is the most tranquil of the city, and only the Ningyo whose duty is to protect the sleeping Naga or maintain the buildings are seen there. Wedged between the Old City and the Naga quarter, the great shiny dome of the Green Flame Forge is dwarfed only by the main Temple of the Chameleon, where hundreds of young Naga were taught, and where most of the Ningyo-Naga magical researches were conducted.

The Ruined Capital

The name of the Ningyo ancient seat of power, Tainted by the battle against the Shadowlands forces, has been lost for ages. It was considered extremely bad luck to mention it, so it slowly faded away from memory over the years. Built before the fall of the Kami and the creation of the Shadowlands, the ruined city now lays beneath the Sea of Shadows. In the tumult of the attack and the rushed evacuation, the Ningyo took only the bare minimum with them. The city contained numerous artifacts and items that the Ningyo brought with them when they severed themselves from the world, and only some of those were salvaged during the short-lived efforts to recover the city, interrupted by the spread of the Taint and the incessant attacks from Shadowlands monsters. Most of the treasures that had to be left behind are certainly corrupted by now, but there are still some Ningyo who think a few vaults of light were sufficiently warded that they could have resisted the corruption of both the years and the Shadowlands, keeping their most precious treasures safe and untainted. At the very least, some powerful magical crystals, relics from the time of the five races alliance, are known to be resistant to the Taint. But so far, given the extreme dangers such a mission would pause, no recovery expedition has been organized. No doubt that the daring adventurers who would face this challenge successfully and return the recovered artifacts to the Ningyo would be abundantly rewarded and forever friends of the Sea People. Rumors say that Shuryoshin, the king of the Koujin, lives in the ruined city.

The Golden Tower

Soon after the Sundering, when Ryujin and his people retreated from the treachery of the surface world, a small group of Ningyo led by the influential mage Somuda contested the decision. Few listened to Somuda's pleas to restore the alliance, and he found himself ostracized by his fellow Ningyo. But Somuda remained undaunted, and with a dozen of his followers, they took upon themselves to build an outpost that would act as a bridge between the races living on the land and the Ningyo, despite Ryujin's protest that such a thing was not needed. At first, it seemed that the lack of enthusiasm from the four other races to come and visit the small Ningyo embassy supported Ryujin's position. But eventually, a small group composed of Kitsu, Troll, Kenku, and Zokujin arrived at the outpost. They wished to save the alliance as well, even though their people were already starting to turn their backs on each other. Somuda felt vindicated. The group decided to follow on Somuda's idea, and erect a building that would be proof that the alliance needed to endure, and that they still could create great things together. It would be a place where members of all races could continue to meet after the destruction of the City of Night. This is how the Golden Tower came to be, the very last creation of the five races to ever be made.

The tower was ultimately a futile attempt. The damage was done, and the cracks opened by the Sundering would never heal. Over time, the Golden Tower became a repository for the last centuries of recorded history of the five races, as well as for their latest works of art, literature and magic. Meant to be a living place, it became a museum for a passing age. The collaboration of all five races ensured that it possessed wondrous features, the most amazing of which was its ability to move almost instantly between two locations, regardless of the distance, by sinking into the earth or water, and emerging somewhere else.

But eventually, even the Kitsu, Troll, Kenku, and Zokujin that helped constructing the Golden Tower deserted the place, and Somuda and his followers were left alone, again. Faced with the cold truth of the alliance's death, Somuda moved the tower to a remote area of the ocean and died of despair shortly after. His daughter Sumanan and the rest of his followers swore to uphold Somuda's ideals and maintain an embassy that would forever be open to the other races. Unfortunately, they did not possess the same knowledge of the rituals necessary to operate the tower: they were only able to move it within the confines of the sea, and each move took them weeks of preparation to perform the rituals. Under Sumanan's guidance, the Ningyo of the Golden Tower sought to return to the greater Ningyo society, and Ryujin welcomed them back without hesitation.

The Golden Tower would rest beneath the sea, a monument to the glory of the five races alliance, only to emerge once every fifty years, always at a different location. Then, Sumanan and her followers would wait a month, hoping to receive a visit from long gone friends, and they would finally return the tower under the waves. It is during the latest emergence of the Golden Tower that it was discovered and attacked by pirates, and then rescued by Kitsuki Tadashi and his comrades.

Mike Brodu

The Zokujin

The Zokujin, like so many other of the native intelligent races of Ningen-do, are a vanishing breed. While they were never numerous, they had a stable population for centuries. Until the day of Broken Thunder.

One of the great truths about the universe is that Tengoku and Jigoku are eternally opposed to one another. every thousand years or so this opposition comes to a head in Ningen-do, and the champions of each side fight for the right to decide the fate of the Mortal Realm. Twice now, when the humans have fought, the forces of Tengoku have won. Many cycles past the Zokujin fought and lost. Once part of the Five Races that brought order and civilization to Ningen-do ages before the Children of Sun and Moon fell, they are now little more than a primitive race waiting for death.

Life and Society

The Zokujin are a long-lived race and their psychological make up reflects their close connection to the Element of Earth. They are patient, slow to change their minds, and not terribly inquisitive. However, they tend to put a lot of deliberation into their actions and once they have decided on a course of action they will follow through on it, no matter how long it takes. If they have one major flaw as a race it is that they are too inclined to stagnation. Any major decisions are deliberated as long as possible, and enacted as slowly and meticulously as the situation permits.

The modern Zokujin live in extended families and small tribes of rarely more than 100 members at any one time. The tribes have a single chief, who is usually the oldest member of the tribe, and whose sole job is to their guide in matters of the outside. They learn all they can and decide on the basis of this knowledge what the best course of action for the tribe is. Zokujin do suffer from deterioration of physical and mental faculties with age, but it is slow and usually not as extreme as the dementia some humans suffer. Males are slightly more common than females, but not obviously so to a casual observer. There is no division of status, labor, rights or duties between the sexes, other than those which are physiologically impossible for the other sex to perform, such as providing milk for the young. Pragmatism also leads most warriors to be males, as it requires only a few males to impregnate many females.

There are not many tribes of Zokujin in the Emerald Empire these days. Surprisingly, the largest of these is the tribe enslaved by the Lion, the Zehkt tribe. They have been enslaved since Akodo walked the land and exterminated the kitsu. When he realized his error, he was determined not to eradicate another possibly intelligent race. Enslavement was the answer. As slavery goes, the Zokujin are not terribly badly off. They do a job that would be hell on humans but is little more than tiresome for them. The worst aspect of their lives is not being in control. On the bright side, they are not preyed on by other beings and have been able to have (for Zokujin) lots of children. In the millennium or so since the creation of Lookout Mountain, the Zokujin have explored nearly all of the mountain and its foundations. They had hoped to find the Bloodwhite Stone in the mountain - the sudden appearance of a mountain with such rich veins of ores could only be the result of the Bloodwhite Stone in their estimation. They have not yet found it, but will not stop looking.

Another large one is the Zesh tribe in the Dragon mountains. Under the de facto leadership of the prophet Kjgkt, one of the Five Immortals. They are the tribe with most contact with humans, barring the Zehkt. They are the tribe most likely to seek out humans and aid other sentient beings in need. They are emotionally the tribe most likely to find the Bloodwhite Stone, being most inclined towards adventure and new things.

The Kktezh tribe lives in the far north, outside of Rokugan's borders, bordering on the Badger lands. They are reclusive and shy and avoid humans wherever possible. The Badger have not been the nicest of allies, and many of the Yobanjin tribes hunt the Zokujin for sport. Should the Badger ever learn of

the Zokujin from the Dragon, they would be far more tolerant of the rock goblins. They would not likely be allies, but the Badger would leave the Zokujin alone and not see them as much of a threat. They are, if anything, the most passive of the tribes.

The Tk'kjezh tribe lives in the northern reaches of the Spine of the World mountains. They are small, little more than the extended family of the Immortal Tjk'k. They stay hidden and have not had contact with humans since before the Fall of the Kami. They are content to keep it this way, and are xenophobic to the extreme, compared to other Zokujin. They are considered insular and even a bit dangerous by other Zokujin, and few have any sort of contact with them. They are the most militant of Zokujin tribes and had their number been greater they would have been a credible power in the area.

The last great tribe has vanished. No other Zokujin know where it went to, and this disturbs them. They lived in Wall Above the Ocean and disappeared sometime around the Fall of the Kami.

Zokujin beyond Rokugan

For some reason, the majority of Zokujin can be found in or around the Emerald Empire. This area seems to have been a center for spirits and magic since the creation of the world, and the Zokujin are no different. There are Zokujin tribes beyond the Emerald Empire and Yobanjin lands, but these are small tribes that never took part in the culture of the Five Races. They live now as they have for millennia, much like the modern Zokujin of Rokugan, in small tribes in tunnel complexes in mountain ranges. They are often enslaved or displaced by Ashalan, jinn and other powerful entities that moved in to the Zokujin lands. They have no contact with their Rokugani kin, and have never known the blessings of the Bloodwhite Stone. Should Rokugani Zokujin ever meet these, they will feel as though these foreign Zokujin are almost lesser beings, though they will not greet them with violence unless absolutely necessary.

Religion

The Zokujin are not quite atheistic in their beliefs, but they are close. It is not that they do not believe in the existence of the kami in the world or in other powerful entities, it is just that they do not worship them. The kami of the mountains are friends you talk to and who are happy to help you out, not beings you beg gifts of. The Sun and Moon are powerful, but they are the result of Zokujin magic, and worshipping something you create strikes the Zokujin as terribly odd, no matter how powerful they are. The Seven Fortunes and the lesser Fortunes are human inventions, and never bother with the Zokujin and vice versa. The Zokujin have not even heard of the Lords of Death yet, or the beliefs of humans beyond Rokugan.

The Elemental Dragons are the closest the Zokujin come to worship of another being, especially the Earth Dragon. The Dragons personify the elements and the Zokujin respect them as this - personifications. To the Zokujin, the Dragons are not beings in themselves, they are avatars of the world and thus merely a lesser reflection of the entirety of the universe. Thus they are paid respect on the off chance a Zokujin should somehow come to the attention of one or even meet one, but there are no rituals or prayers said in general to them. The Zokujin attempt to show respect in action and how they live without the empty ritual the humans seem so fond of.

True religious fervor is reserved for the Bloodwhite Stone. While this may seem like idolatry, the Zokujin do not see it as such. The fates of the Zokujin became entwined with the Bloodwhite Stone eons ago, and to the Zokujin it is truly the future of their race. Every year the Zokujin gather at midsummer to recount the history of their race, their successes and failures and to reaffirm their dedication towards recovering the Bloodwhite Stone. This is called the Day of Remembrance and Penance. Should the Bloodwhite Stone ever be recovered, all Zokujin would gather around it and reform to a single tribe, and the Immortals would be no more.

History

The Zokujin are an ancient race, perhaps the most ancient race to live in Ningen-do. Their lifespans are long, and the race has existed several generations. The time involved boggles the human mind, and the handful of humans who have learned of the Zokujin's ancient history tend to disbelieve it. After all, it means that what the humans have learned is wrong, or at least wildly inaccurate, and that cannot be the case.

The Zokujin do have a strong oral tradition. Being so long-lived and having so few beings in their tribes, they have not needed much by the way of writing. The shamans and leaders tend to be literate in the writings used by the Five Races, but have usually not learned any human writing.

The Zokujin's own version of the history of the world and the time leading up to the Day of Broken Thunder differs, not surprisingly, from the tales of the other intelligent races. However, they are probably unique in their belief that they are the creators of the Sun and Moon, rather than the other way around. Their version of events is known as the Great Loss, and can be roughly translated into human language like this:

The other races will tell you how the Sun and Moon created the world. We know better.

The world came out of nothing, of nothing and with nothing preceding it. Out of this came the Zokujin and we were the first. We came and saw the emptiness of the world. There was nothing, just a featureless plain. No green, no color, no mountains, no lakes, no beings other than us. There were just the plains and us.

The coming of the Bloodwhite Stone changed all this.

The worlds and the heavens pressed upon each other and created imbalance. As the Ningyo, and later the Naga, learned how oysters produce pearls, the imbalance was pressed into physical shape and a pearl of the worlds was made. It held great power for change, as imbalance causes

change and it was the essence of imbalance. The Zokujin saw the Bloodwhite Stone and knew that it must be kept safe. We gathered it and brought it to our largest cavern and set watch over it. The greatest of our shamans studied it for generations and learned its secrets. The imbalance stored within could be used to cause stability. We caused the Sun to rise for warmth and light, and we caused the Moon to rise for light and coolness. But these creations were too powerful and soon set themselves up as rulers of all Creation. And for fear of making something worse or even unmaking everything, the Zokujin did not attempt any such great feats again. The Bloodwhite Stone had to be protected from others to prevent any others making the mistakes of the Zokujin.

The Bloodwhite Stone was protected, and we dedicated our lives to watching it. For generations we watched over the Bloodwhite Stone. Our souls became connected to it over time and we were both changed. Imbalance became controlled, balance shifted.

We had purpose, and we built great cities and gained great knowledge. We aided the trolls with their cities, we grew together with the kenku, Ningyo and kitsu to build a society which none had seen the likes of before or since. The trolls were insatiable in their quest for knowledge and invention, the kenku roamed and dedicated themselves to art and stories. The Ningyo kept themselves beneath the waves and as the most distant of the Five Races kept peace between us and promoted understanding and contact. The kitsu were reserved, and wandered the other realms out of curiosity. We brought stability and the sense of continuity to the races. We were the history, the base upon which everything else was built and based. We built the great stone buildings in the City of the Night for the kitsu and gave our expertise to the trolls in Volturnum.

The Day of Broken Thunder

It was known to us that the Corruption was a constant enemy. It tried to make everything like it, to disrupt the harmony we had created. Every two generations it marshaled its forces and assaulted the world. Four times we turned them back, the Zokujin and the Five Races. Four times we gathered our greatest, our best and brightest, and four times they defeated the threat of Corruption. The fifth time we failed. We had become complacent. Of all the Five Races we were the keepers of history, the ones who remembered the past. This was our undoing. We thought we knew our enemy. We thought we could do as we had done the last time, and the time before that, and the time before that and the time before that. We were wrong and thus the Five Races failed. Corruption is corruption in its truest sense. It knew our strengths and weaknesses, and we did not listen to the kitsu when they warned of danger. The banishment of the Tsuno should have been warning enough.

Corruption corrupted the Tsuno by playing on their pride, and with their might gone, we were weakened. The kenku were powerful swordsmen but poor soldiers. The element of Air is strong in them and they are always creating, always doing, never thinking. And they flew about trying to find answers rather than stay at home and protect the Five Races. We let them go, because they did as they always had. The abandonment of the kenku should have been warning enough.

Corruption corrupted the kenku by playing on their flightiness, and we were weakened. The Ningyo were the strength of the waves and the relentless movement. Their homes under the waves were endangered and they fought amongst themselves trying to decide how best to combat the invasion. The Ningyo were unprepared for the true enemy and came too late. The chaos among the Ningyo should have been warning enough.

Corruption corrupted the Ningyo by setting their essence against itself, and we were weakened. The trolls were the creators of many wonders, and with only a little help and guidance along the way they could figure out much. They were also brash and eager to fight and powerful warriors. Many of their great works were singled out by Corruption and in their anger they lent their hand to foolish works rather than supporting us. The blind anger of the trolls should have been warning enough.

Corruption corrupted the trolls by directing their essence towards a false target, and we were weakened. The greatest tragedy is the Zokujin's. We saw the changes happening in our fellows and we did nothing. We suggested that something was not right and did not press the matter when we were ignored. We told no one of the Bloodwhite Stone and its importance and paid the price for our lack of trust. A great horde of monsters tore through the guard of the Bloodwhite Stone and spirited it away. Even in our weakened state, had the Five Races stood together we would have been victorious, and defended the Bloodwhite Stone. But we did nothing and failed.

Corruption corrupted the Zokujin by convincing us to remain unmoved. And our apathy should have been warning enough.

Corruption corrupted the Five Races by playing on their strengths and their very essence, and we failed and the world was cast into darkness and the Five Races have drifted apart. The wonders of the vanished age are gone. Only the Bloodwhite Stone can restore our lost civilization."

The Zokujin fled from their great cities and retreated to the outskirts of their civilization. They spread out and separated, hoping that they would survive. The dark times that followed were terrible and many died, but the Zokujin survived, and saw the rise of the Naga and how they fought back Corruption, allowing the world to follow its own destiny again. Second only to the loss of the Bloodwhite Stone, the worst thing to happen to the Zokujin in their own Thousand Years of Darkness (known as the Day of Broken Thunder, as the Zokujin do not see any difference between the actual day they lost and the time following it) was that the Zokujin spent so much time hiding and remaining quiet that they became too used to it. Too used to doing nothing. This has influenced their actions ever since. This tale is told to all Zokujin, and does not vary by even a word no matter which tribe tells it. Even the most iconoclastic and rebellious of Zokujin would not conceive of altering the story in the slightest.

The Five Immortals

The Five Immortals are in many ways the Zokujin's version of the Oracles. They are effectively immortal, they have powers beyond that of normal mortals, and they are knowledgeable and revered for their greater connection to the elements. They are always powerful shamans (no less than Rank 5 when chosen). They are the expression of duration and unchanging perseverance, and in many ways the souls of the Zokujin in absence of the Bloodwhite Stone. They are unlike Oracles in that they live amongst the Zokujin and provide active guidance, and they are under no restrictions to be impartial like the Oracles are (or were). The Immortals guide the Zokujin and their search for the Bloodwhite Stone. They have limited prophetic abilities, similar to that of the Inner Gift (lesser prophecy) Advantage. They can make an Awareness/Divination roll TN 20 to correctly interpret these minor prophecies. They are often the leaders of their tribes, being the oldest Zokujin there.

The Immortals were created the day before the Bloodwhite Stone was lost. Five ancient and revered shamans gathered, disturbed by the attacks of Corruption and the lack of any champions arising to combat it. They touched the Bloodwhite Stone and did the forbidden: they used its power. They attempted to turn themselves into the fated champions, one for each of the Five Races. Things did not work out as planned.

They were endowed with great knowledge and immunity to age and disease, but they realized that Fate could not be cheated in this manner. The Zokujin were too aligned towards the element of Earth to defeat Corruption. Only the balance of the Five Races working in harmony could be victorious. The newly created immortals foresaw the loss of the Bloodwhite Stone and knew they could do nothing. They led the escape of Zokujin and hoped to survive long enough to find the Bloodwhite Stone after the forces of Corruption were finally defeated.

Though the Immortals are immortal, their minds are not. Even considering the long lifetimes of the average Zokujin, they get weary of life. Millennia of watching new races arise and fall and never finding the Bloodwhite Stone takes its toll and all of the original Immortals have passed on their gifts to another Zokujin and accepted death. All Immortals know that the Bloodwhite Stone still exists. They can feel it. They are simply incapable of determining where it is, and their greatest magic cannot aid them in finding it. It is a constant source of drive and desperation for all Immortals, and one of the reasons they eventually tire of life.

The great question on everyone's mind is: why have not the Immortals freed the Zokujin living in slavery to the Lion? The answer is simple: the Zokujin wish to leave no stone unturned in their search for the Bloodwhite Stone, and for the moment the Zehkt tribe is in no danger and can freely search Lookout Mountain. The Immortal of their tribe, Hhkt, took over from his predecessor and has simply kept a low profile, and none in the Lion suspect there is any reason to fear the Zokujin. Hhkt is a very calm and humble creature, and the Immortal least likely to do anything at all other than eat and sleep and look for the Bloodwhite Stone. He is the oldest Zokujin in his tribe but leaves the actual details of leading to others.

Jktit is the Immortal of the Tk'kjezh tribe and the closest thing one comes to a corrupted Zokujin. He is bitter and old (only barely younger than Kjgkt) and keeps his tribe apart from the others. He has mostly given up hope of finding the Bloodwhite Stone, but refuses to relinquish his power. He and his tribe dig deeper and deeper into the earth, but find little else than darkness. Some ancient creatures have been wakened and his power is all that keeps them from escaping and causing much havoc. He is trying to bring them under his control - ostensibly to aid in finding the Bloodwhite Stone, but a few have suspected him of darker motives. On the few occasions he meets with the other Immortals he is aloof and cold and disapproving of all others.

Ntkh is the Immortal of the Kktezh tribe and the most vocal opponent of Kjgkt's policy of interfering in human affairs. The other Immortals think he is a bit weird and believe his 'wait and see' attitude is taken to extremes. He is also the greatest stonecrafter of them and has abilities which many thought lost after the Day of Broken Thunder. He just does not see the point in using these abilities.

One thing all Immortals agree on is that almost as important as finding the Bloodwhite Stone is finding what happened to the Lost Tribe and their Immortal. Kjgkt and Ntkh feel that the Bloodwhite Stone can only be found if all Immortals are looking for it, and are worried about what happened to them. And Kjgkt alone feels that actually searching for them is a good idea; Ntkh feels that the Bloodwhite Stone will appear when the time is right.

Relations with Other Races

Humans

The humans have generally not been kind to the Zokujin. The normal human response to the presence of other intelligent beings has been to kill them and take their lands. The Zokujin were saved only by the fact that the nascent Lion clan encountered the kitsu first. Once the Lion had enslaved the local Zokujin tribe, the other tribes decided that it was best to stay out of the way of humans in general.

Crab - The Crab have in general had very little contact with the Zokujin. The Zokujin have fled from the Twilight Mountains due to the Taint and monsters there, and the Crab rarely leave their lands. When they have encountered each other, the Crab have often been fairly aggressive, as any non-human that isn't a Nezumi or (recently) Naga is automatically suspected of being Tainted. However, those rare encounters that have not resulted in violence have shown the Crab to be among the most tolerant of the Clans. The Zokujin recognize the Crab Clan's connection to Earth and this aids communication between the two groups.

Still, the only notable contact the two groups have had in the past couple of generations was Hida Kisada's meeting with the prophet Kjgkt. Kisada's involvement with the Zokujin is so far known only to Kuon, but Kuon intends to honor any debts his grandfather may have incurred. Should Kjgkt or another Zokujin on his behalf manage to get the attention of Kuon, he will have a powerful ally should he need it.

There is one major point of contention, unknown to the Crab. Osano-wo and the Crab destroyed the troll kingdom and reduced the faltering race to savagery. The Zokujin will never forget the destruction of one of the Five Races at the hands of the Crab.

Crane - The Crane have little or no contact with the Zokujin at all. The Crane lands are free of the Zokujin, and should the Crane meet them they will react with distaste at the dirty, goblin-like beings. There is little difference between a dirty lizard and a dirty rat to the Crane, and the Zokujin just avoid them as much as possible. The last time the Crane encountered a Zokujin was in the presence of Dragon magistrates in the incident that sparked the War of Silk and Steel. The Crane are just as likely to kill a Zokujin on sight as they are to kill Nezumi, thinking it a Tainted monster. Enterprising Daidoji might very well try to entice or coerce Zokujin to aid them against an enemy should they learn of the Zokujin's abilities to shape earth and stone.

Dragon - The human clan that has the most contact with the Zokujin is the Dragon. The Zesh tribe lives in the mountains there, and the two are distant allies. Technically, the Dragon have been the clan with the longest friendly ties to the Zokujin. The Dragon protect the Zokujin when necessary, and the Zokujin share their knowledge and special talents when needed. Now that Tamori Shaitung is dead and Togashi has returned to Tengoku, the Zokujin are drawing away. The Dragon have not noticed this yet, since contact is in the best of cases rare and short-lived, and the Dragon are busy with their own problems.

Lion - The Lion are the clan that the Zokujin like the least. The Lion have enslaved an entire tribe and use them to mine for copper. While the Zokujin are not terribly mistreated as such, they do not appreciate the bereavement of freedom. Every year a handful young Zokujin try to escape and are often caught and punished, or failing that, a random Zokujin is punished instead. The Lion do not seem to see the parallels between their founder's extermination of the Kitsu and the enslavement of the Zokujin. Lesser beings are to be used, not respected.

Mantis - There are a few Zokujin in the Moshi territories, but not many, and contact has been limited. The eldest of the Moshi are aware of the presence of the Zokujin, but the two groups have no contact beyond incidental meetings. The Moshi were dedicated to the Lady Sun most of the time and the Zokujin lived in the rocks and minded their own business. This is mostly how things are now. Other than this, the Mantis are unaware of the Zokujin and could not care less for them if they did find out.

Phoenix - The Phoenix, with their great emphasis on knowledge and learning are as a clan aware of the Zokujin, and have some vague theories about their position in pre-Kami world. Still, they are not terribly interested in the rock-eaters. They are small, few, non-violent and show little by the way of power. The Zesh tribe in the Dragon lands lives near the border between the two clans, and send scouts into Phoenix territory to find new veins of metals and good minerals. The Phoenix have sometime seen these but have yet to come to blows. The Zokujin have explained their peaceful intentions and stayed away from those areas the Phoenix did not want them in, and the two groups leave it at that. Should the Phoenix masters learn of Kjgkt's great age and knowledge, they would likely seek him out to plumb his mind for knowledge of times past.

Scorpion - The Scorpion as a whole know of the Zokujin, and have no compunction about using them when necessary. Creating traps underground to hinder invading armies, helping them infiltrate well-guarded stone structures from below, creating tunnels for hidden movement between places. The Scorpion know of the peaceful nature of the Zokujin and therefore simply use threat of violence to coerce the Zokujin into helping them. The Scorpion are also known for eliminating witnesses, even non-human witnesses, so have no problem killing the Zokujin when they are finished with them. For this reason the Zokujin keep out of Scorpion lands.

Unicorn - The Unicorn have little to do with the Zokujin, though they are likely the Clan other than the Mantis most open towards cultures and creatures that do not fit in with Rokugan as a whole. The Unicorn prefer the open fields and the Zokujin prefer being underground and thus the two have little opportunity to meet. The Unicorn who have met the Zokujin generally do not care either way what the Zokujin are. So long as they do not threaten the Unicorn, their horses or the Naga, the Zokujin are left to their own devices.

The closest the two have come to direct contact was when the Unicorn unearthed the City of the Night. The Zokujin were aware of the City being uncovered, and worried at the humans finding the secrets there. A combination of low numbers, difficulty in getting to the place, Moto Vordu's magic and the Tsuno reappearing kept the Zokujin from doing anything but observing. Shinjo Shono and Hantei Naseru's disruption of the evil plot reassured the Zokujin that there were at least some decent humans around, and decided to leave it at that. There was little to be gained revealing themselves to the Unicorn at this time.

Imperials - The Imperial families as a whole do not know of the Zokujin, and no Zokujin live in the Imperial lands. The Imperials would, if possible, care even less for the Zokujin than the Crane do, and would likely have no qualms about eradicating all of the 'dirty beasts'. The Seppun would only consider them a potential threat - a race of beings that used to rule the world, but have been enslaved for a millennium makes a prime candidate for a lot of hate against the leaders of the oppressors. The Miya are the Imperials most likely to ignore the Zokujin. They are not, technically speaking, subjects of the Empire, and so long as they do not make any trouble, the Miya could not care less about the Zokujin. The Otomo are the ones most likely to desire an actual extermination or total expulsion of the Zokujin. The Zokujin being non-human, having no conception of honor or propriety and being different, it is a rare Otomo who would treat them with anything resembling respect.

Yobanjin - The varied tribes of the Yobanjin rarely encounter the Zokujin. Some leave them to their own devices, some hunt them for sport. On the whole, the Zokujin avoid them whenever possible. Now that Tamori Chosai, Dark Oracle of Fire, has chosen to attack the Dragon, many of his pawns come through Zokujin territory from the Yobanjin lands and the Zokujin must be extra careful on their rare ventures above-ground.

Lands beyond Rokugan - Virtually no Zokujin are to be found beyond Rokugan and its borders. They are at a loss to explain why, and would likely be puzzled by the question should it ever be posed. Contact with humans outside of the Emerald Empire and the yobanjin is so rare as to be unheard of, and there is no great chance of this changing.

Nonhumans

With the plethora of intelligent races that populate the Realms, it is impossible to determine a single common thread in their relations with the Zokujin.

Shadowlands - The Shadowlands has had no contact of note with the Zokujin. Most Tainted beasts would kill them and eat them. The Spider are too new to have had any contact, but would view them much as the Scorpion - assets to be used and discarded. The Zokujin would never willingly aid a being they knew to be allied with Jigoku. If there is one likely location of the Bloodwhite Stone it is in the Shadowlands, but the Zokujin dare not venture in there.

Nezumi - The two groups have had little or no contact. The Nezumi came to sentience well after the fall of the Five Races, and the Zokujin had retreated to their tunnels long before the Nezumi found the ruins of the Five Races. In modern times, the Broken Shinbone tribe in the Dragon mountains were familiar with the Zesh tribe, but the two had little in common, and therefore little contact. The Zokujin do not eat the same things as the Nezumi, and produce little the Nezumi covet. At best the two would aid each other if they came across one in need of help. Now that the Nezumi are gone, the Zokujin are worried. They wonder what could cause the entire tribe to vanish overnight. They have not seen any signs of oni or hostile humans, but wonder all the same. Perhaps the judgment of the heavens has hit the Nezumi too. Are the Zokujin next?

Naga - The Naga lived in the deep forests, the Zokujin in the mountains. Both parties kept it that way, and neither had any inclination to alter the situation. Should the few Naga who are awake meet a Zokujin, they will most likely not make anything of it. The Zokujin are not a threat, nor in any position to aid the Naga, and vice versa. The Zokujin had little contact with the Naga after the Day of Broken Thunder, and the Naga had little cause to contact weird lizards living underground. Like the Nezumi, the Naga came after the time of the Five Races, and the Zokujin had already vanished from the surface.

Shapeshifters - As a whole, the Zokujin and Shapeshifters have no direct contact. The Shapeshifters rarely come to the mortal realm, and when they do they are more inclined to visit the humans than anyone else. The Zokujin are mostly confined to their small tribes and tunnels and not interesting to talk to. Neither party is generally inclined towards violence, so the odd meeting that might occur will likely be peaceful.

Kenku - The Kenku are an ancient race and remember with sorrow the fall of the Zokujin. However, they also know that the Zokujin must raise themselves up again of their own effort should their struggle have any meaning. Kenku will give minor aid to the Zokujin when they meet one in trouble, but otherwise do not have any contact. Both races have retired to their own devices, and there is little chance of this changing. The Zokujin and Kenku were often in polite disagreement with each other during the time of the Five Races. The Zokujin felt the Kenku to be somewhat flighty and too eager to change, while the Kenku saw the Zokujin as staid, boring and suffering from a lack of imagination and innovation.

Kitsu - The Kitsu are all but extinct now, worse off than the Zokujin. Nintai is the only true kitsu left in Ningen-do, and he has spent his time with the Nezumi. Now that the Nezumi are gone too, it may very well be that Nintai will try to make contact with what remains of the Five Races. The few Kitsu left before Akodo led his followers to eradicate them had only indifferent contact with the Zokujin. The fatalism of the Zokujin and the introspection of the kitsu caused the two parties to drift apart and when the Kitsu were in need, the Zokujin were too slow to react. Nintai does not really blame the Zokujin for their lack of aid, considering his own past. (note: this information details the situation before Nintai's death.)

Ningyo - The Ningyo were temperamentally similar to the Zokujin. While the Zokujin lived much longer and embody patience and stability and the Ningyo embody change and movement, the two got along well. The Zokujin would often aid the Ningyo in shaping great buildings and cities while the Ningyo would find rare minerals, especially pearls, which the Zokujin favored. In modern times the two have no contact. The Ningyo stay in the ocean, and are gradually driven deeper and further out from the coast, and the Zokujin gradually diminish and stay away from humans (who tend to gather around coastlines). Should the two meet, they will both recall stories of the times of the Five Races, and would likely strike up a tentative friendship, once they get used to the other.

Trolls - The trolls learned their stonecraft at the feet of the Zokujin. While the trolls eventually surpassed their allies in the realm of magic, the Zokujin's expertise in the realm of stonecraft was always respected and valued. Until the fall. Now, the trolls are a group of barbaric beasts. The Zokujin stay well away from the trolls, and the trolls have forgotten about the Zokujin and the time of the Five Races. Though the Zokujin feel sad for the loss of the troll's proud history and culture, they are concerned with their own dying race and cannot help the trolls. Their lost friendship with the trolls is the major sticking point in any potential relations with the Crab clan.

Ogres - The ogres were proud and mighty, and their civilization followed on the heels of the fall of the Five Races. The Zokujin had little in common with the enormous brutes and stayed away from them if at all possible. The ogres saw little use in the Zokujin and rarely bothered to do anything more than chase them away when encountered.

Ashalan - The Ashalan are aware of the existence of Zokujin, but have had no direct contact with them. The Zokujin have been unconnected with the events leading up to the Day of Wrath and later in the Burning Sands, so the Ashalan have no interest in them.

Current goals

The Zokujin have one overriding goal - finding the Bloodwhite Stone. However, the Zokujin are few and getting fewer, and a sense of apathy has fallen on the race as a whole, both as a mystical result of having lost their connection to the Bloodwhite Stone in the first place, and from the generations of loss and failure in finding it. Unless the Zokujin pull themselves together and make a concerted effort to find their precious relic they will wither and die. The most active Zokujin is Kjgkt, but he is too concerned with protecting his tribe to get anything done on the larger scale. He hopes to encourage the failing race to revitalize and find the Bloodwhite Stone, but understands the nature of earth - it is at rest and little can convince it to move. The Zokujin are a long-lived species and have a much lesser sense of urgency than the shorter-lived races. While the Zokujin as a whole may be driven to find the Bloodwhite Stone, they are not in any particular hurry to do so. Slow and steady gets you there safe and sound. The only problem is they might be a little too slow.

Zokujin Characters

As one can tell, the Zokujin are unlikely to join a party, and make it difficult to travel in the Empire. On the rare occasion a Zokujin will leave his tribe and tunnels to join humans, he will likely have a singular goal in mind. This may be a young Zokujin trying to find the Bloodwhite Stone, or one aiding his Dragon allies with his special talents for communing with Earth kami (as was the case with the Zokujin who was killed in the opening moves of the War of Silk and Steel).

Zokujin who travel outside their territory learn to hide their true nature. Humans in general are xenophobic, and most will take the Zokujin to be a goblin of some sort. Skills like Disguise and Stealth are necessary for a Zokujin to travel in human lands. Other than this, Etiquette is absolutely necessary should they ever encounter humans. The humans might consider the Zokujin to be monsters at first sight, but should a Zokujin show proper courtesy and manners, most will be less inclined to kill it on sight. Peasants are likely to consider the Zokujin to be some sort of malevolent spirit and do anything to appease them.

Most Zokujin are warriors, whose great strength and resilience is reminiscent of the Crab. They do not move fast but are unstoppable and immovable.

Kjgkt – Zokujin prophet

Kjgkt is the Zokujin most active in the world today. He is one of the very few who makes regular contact with the humans and helps them. He is fascinated by them, mostly thanks to his memories of the kami Togashi.

The prophet Kjgkt was one of the first beings to meet with Togashi after the fall of the kami. A misunderstanding between the two caused the Zokujin to retreat and simply observe the humans for a millennium. After learning of Togashi's sacrifice on the Second Day of Thunder and later witnessing Hitomi's descent to madness, Kjgkt, de facto leader of the Zesh tribe, decided to come into contact with the humans once more. It was he who convinced the spirits of the mountains to aid the fledgling Tamori family in the wake of the Agasha's defection. He is a powerful spellcaster who has not cast so much as a single spell in the last year, insatiably curious about the humans who have come to dominate the land, and remarkably youthful for someone who is likely to be the only being alive in Ningen-do to remember two Days of Thunder (and been awake and active the time between them). Though he has aided the Dragon over the last decades, he is beginning to feel that it is time to leave them to their own devices.

He felt the Judgment of the Heavens when they recalled Togashi. He was unaware that Togashi had returned to the mortal realm in the guise of his grandson Satsu and unaware of why the heavens called upon the mortal realm. All he knows is that something big and bad happened, and he was powerless to see it coming or stop it. Shortly before this, his friends Tamori Shaitung and Tamori Nakamuro were killed in a great battle, one he was not on hand to help with. Now he hears the new Sun and Moon have decided to choose a new emperor and bring the mortals back in line. Too much is happening, and Kjgkt feels he should take a step back and see what the result will be before reaffirming his ties to the humans. The humans are being taken to task by the Heavens and the Zokujin do not want to be caught in the middle should the humans rebel. Perhaps the Zokujin are not served by contact with humans. Perhaps they are destined to succeed or fail entirely on their own. It is an opinion held by the other Immortals, but Kjgkt has never

liked that idea; if the time of the Five Races taught them anything it is the value and necessity of working with other races.

Kjgkt is the Zokujin PCs are most likely to meet. If ever they go to Dragon lands he might be there, waiting for news of the humans. He knows Rokugani and knows enough of etiquette to avoid giving deadly insults, but he is old and set in his ways enough to not stand on ceremony. Despite his age he has an impish sense of humor and a strong confidence in his own abilities as a prophet and shaman.

Kjgkt

School: Tamori shugenja 8

Air: 3	**Earth: 8**	**Fire: 5**	**Water: 6**
Awareness: 6		Intelligence: 7	Strength: 7
Honor: -		**Glory: 0.1 (8.0*)**	**Status: 0.0 (7.0*)**

Advantages: Friend of the Elements, Friendly Kami, Blessing of the Elements (Earth), Strength of the Earth (2)
Disadvantages: Fascination (humans and human culture)
Special: Earthcraft, Carapace 8 (stone and metal only), Underground Adaptation

Skills: Divination (astrology, omens) 8, Staves 5, Lore: History (Dragon Clan) 8, Jiujutsu 7, Spellcraft (Elemental Knowledge) 6, Medicine (nonhuman medicine: Zokujin) 7, Meditation (zanji) 7**, Lore: Rokugani culture (Dragon clan) 5, Stealth 3, Hunting 1, Craft (mining) 3, Craft (masonry) 3, Craft (armorsmithing) 3
Spells: His intimate connection with the Earth kami and his great age means Kjgkt knows all non-Secret Earth spells as innate abilities, and all Tamori secret spells. Shaitung valued Kjgkt enough to share her family's secrets with him. After all, without him, the Tamori would not have the strength of the Earth kami.
In addition, he knows Bo of Water, Heart of Nature, Path to Inner Peace, Perceive Harmony, Reflections of P'an Ku, Reflective Pool, Regrow the Wound, Silent Waters, Wisdom and Clarity, Peace of the Kami, Evil Ward, and Tamori's Curse.

**Glory and Status rank only when among other Zokujin.*
***Kjgkt uses his Earth Ring instead of Void Ring for Meditation or any other roll that requires a Void Ring.*

Zokujin Warrior [Bushi]

Those few who have seen the Zokujin fight have commented that they seem much like the Hida - indefatigable and immovable. Unlike the Crab, they do not show joy or bloodlust, just a workmanlike detachment.

There is no school Benefit or Starting Honor. Use the default Traits, Rings and Honor of a standard Zokujin.

Skills: Defense 2, Heavy Weapons, Lore: history, Craft: metalworking, Lore: Shadowlands

Rank 1: Earth to Earth

The Earth kami are friends of the Zokujin, and have taught the Zokujin much. You gain a bonus to your TN to Be Hit, attacks and Damage equal to your Earth Ring. You gain a Free Raise when using the Defense Skill.

Rank 2: Scripture of Stone

Whenever you take damage, you ignore an amount equal to your Earth Ring. You also ignore twice your Earth in Wound penalties.

Rank 3: Scripture of Steel

The Zokujin know that steel is stronger than flesh and use this to great advantage. You gain an additional attack per round. You also gain a free Emphasis in every melee weapon skill you possess.

Rank 4: Dust to Dust

All things return to dust when they die. You gain twice your Earth Ring to all attack and damage rolls and your TN to Be Hit. This replaces the bonus from Rank 1. When in Full Defense your normal carapace applies to all physical sources of damage, not just metal and stone.

Rank 5: Avalanche

What can stop an avalanche? You gain twice the usual number of Free Raises when in the Full Attack posture. Your Wounds at each Wound Rank are doubled.

Hida Akira

Path

New Path

Master of Beasts [Bushi]

Technique Rank: 1
Path of Entry: None, this is an entry level path.
Path of Egress: Any human bushi school.

Benefit: +1 Intelligence
Honor: 1.5
Skills: Animal Handling (Any Emphasis), Hunting, Horsemanship, Kenjutsu, Athletics, Medicine, and a 2nd rank of Animal Handling or Horsemanship
Outfit: Katana, Wakizashi, ashigaru armor, well worn traveling clothes, sandals, traveling pack, one small to medium animal (pending GM approval)

Technique: Whispers of the Stablemaster

The sensei who teach this technique show you not only the ways of all animals, but also the best way to control them at all times. Your maximum number of Emphases for the Animal Handling skill is in no way limited by the skill's rank, and purchasing those Emphases cost half of the normal associated cost (to a minimum of 1). You can control a number of animals equal to your Insight Rank. To maintain control, the animal must be within a 30' radius of the controller or in sight (whichever extends the furthest). If attempting to take control of an animal already controlled by another person (such as a horse with a rider), you must succeed at a Contested Intelligence/Animal Handling skill roll. The current animal controller receives a Free Raise on this roll. Animals that come under your control this way will no longer obey orders from their previous controller. You may not order an animal to attack or harm its previous controller, but you can forbid it to harm you. Finally, for each animal under your control, you gain +1 to your TN to Be Hit, and they each gain +1k0 on Attack Rolls.

Akodo Harubi

Expanded Skills

High Skill

Artisan Skill

New skill: Th'kwee
Th'kwee, which means "putting-it-down", is the Nezumi art of painting. It is "cruder" than Rokugani art, but impressive nonetheless. It uses bold colors and thick pigments and is often painted on the side of a tree, a stone wall or a scrap of silk. Th'kwee is more rooted in realism than standard Rokugani paintings; when a Rattling paints his friends, it's so he can remember him rather than to create a piece of beauty. *Updated from Way of the Rattling p.52*

High Skill

Performance Skill

New skill: Mee-i'thich
The Nezumi version of dance translates into "flying-through-dreams-that-are-yet-to-be". It is both ritual and entertainment used by both Remembers and Shamans. This is a High Skill for Nezumi and a Low Skill for everybody else. *Updated from Way of the Rattling p.51*

High Skill

Spellcraft

Emphases: Name Lore, Pearl Magic
Name Lore: This Emphasis grants knowledge of the true power of Name. An Intelligence/Spellcraft (Name Lore) roll TN 15 allows the character to identify a particular Name Spell as it is cast. A successful roll vs. TN 20 can determine if a Name Spell has been cast in the area within a number of hours equal to the Spellcraft skill rank. With three Raises, the particular spell and target can be determined as well. Nezumi Shaman uses this Emphasis to communicate with the Transcendent. These abilities cannot be used without this Emphasis. *Updated from Way of the Rattling p.51*
Pearl Magic: This Emphasis pertains to Naga Pearl Magic and can be used, among other things, to determine which pearl holds enough magical energy to become spell pearls or even special pearls. *Homebrew, inspired by Way of the Naga*

HIGH SKILL

Storytelling

Emphases: Tloo'cha'thrr
Tloo'cha'thrr: The Nezumi version of poetry translates into "Too-funny-to-be-repeated". It shares the haiku's spontaneity, but this is where all resemblance ends. Tloo'cha'thrr is a humorous observation of the poet's own existence. A good example would be the poem composed by the great Nezumi poet, Kee'thrr'thrr: "Sun rose fast today while Kee'thrr'thrr fall asleep-sleep. Sun so mad I not say hello, she burn-burn my nose. Sun not my friend no more." *Updated from Way of the Rattling p.52*

MERCHANT SKILL

Craft Skills

Emphases: Field Repair, Repair.
Field Repair: This Emphasis is used when making quick, temporary, field repairs. Such repairs still requires some sort of tools however, and the Gamemaster is free to assign any penalties he deems fit for lack of or inappropriate tools. Such repairs usually last for 2k1 Rokugani hours. Needless to say, this Emphasis is highly prized among ronin and Nezumi. *Homebrew*
Repair: This Emphasis is used when making durable, more long lasting, repairs. These repairs always require, at the very least the use of tools, if not a complete work station, and the Gamemaster is free to assign any penalties he deems fit for lack of or inappropriate tools. Repairing an item also require half of the item's original creation cost in materials. *Homebrew*

Mastery Abilities
Rank 3: Your Field Repairs now last 3k1 Rokugani hours.
Rank 5: You now require 5% less raw materials for crafting and/or repairing an item.
Rank 7: Your Field Repairs now last 3k2 Rokugani hours.
Rank 10: You now require 15% less raw materials for crafting and/or repairing an item.

BUGEI SKILL

Heavy Weapons

Emphases: Pearl Staff, Ogre Club, Zokujin Bludgeon
Specific Weapon: This Emphasis represents expertise in the use of certain weapons like the Naga pearl staff. See p.43 for the game mechanics of the pearl staff, the Ogre club, and the Zokujin bludgeon. *Updated from The Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.89, 91-92*

BUGEI SKILL

Knives

Emphases: Naga Katar
Naga Katar: This Emphasis represents expertise in the use of the Naga katar. See p.43 for the game mechanics of the Naga katar. *Updated from The Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.88*

BUGEI SKILL

Kyujutsu

Emphases: Naga Bow
Naga Bow: This Emphasis represents expertise in the use of the Naga Bow. See p.44 for the game mechanics of the Naga bow (called Serpent Bow). *Updated from The Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.88*

BUGEI SKILL

Nezumi Ranged Weapons (Agility)

Emphases: Bolo, Green-Green-White Axe, Tach'ck
Specific Weapon: This Emphasis represents expertise in the use of certain weapons like the bolo. See p.43 for the game mechanics of the Green-Green-White axe, and p.45 for the Tach'ck. *Updated from The Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.86 and Way of the Rattling p.136-137*

BUGEI SKILL

Nonhuman Weapons (Agility)

Weapons that require nonhuman anatomy to use.
Emphases: Tail-Claw, Tail Mace
Specific Weapon: This Emphasis represents expertise in the use of certain weapons like the tail-claw. See p.42 for the game mechanics of the tail-claw, and p.45 for the tail-mace. It can only be purchased by characters with the adequate anatomy to use the specific weapon. *Updated from Way of the Rattling p.136 and Homebrewed*

BUGEI SKILL

Spears

Emphases: Ningyo Trident
Ningyo Trident: This Emphasis represents expertise in the use of the Ningyo trident. See p.43 for the game mechanics of the Ningyo trident. *Updated from The Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.90*

BUGEI SKILL

Staves

Emphases: Chrchr, Naga Pearl Staff
Chrchr: This Emphasis represents expertise in the use of the Chrchr. See p.42 for the game mechanics of the Chrchr. *Updated from The Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.85*
Naga Pearl Staff: This Emphasis represents expertise in the use the Naga Pearl Staff. See p.43 for the game mechanics of the Pearl Staff. *Updated from The Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.87*

BUGEI SKILL

Swordsmanship (Agility)

Emphases: Isthyr
Isthyr: This Emphasis represents expertise in the use of the Naga Scimitar. See p.42 for the game mechanics of the Isthyr. *Updated from The Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.87*

Low Skill

Shadowlands Lore

Emphases: Deep Shadowlands, Nezumi Tribal Lore
Deep Shadowlands: This Emphasis represents intimate knowledge of the deep Shadowlands; an area of the Shadowlands that no human eyes has ever seen and where human can go without instantly, and irrevocably, become Lost. As such this Emphasis is only available to the Lost and the Nezumi. It represents limited knowledge of the deep Shadowlands, where to find edible food (at least for a Nezumi and some Lost samurai), and safe sleeping quarters. *Updated from Way of the Rattling p. 51*
Nezumi Tribal Lore: The Nezumi version of heraldry. This Emphasis represents knowledge of the various totems, fetishes, and pheromones used as markings by a particular tribe. Any characters without a Nezumi's sense of smell are at +10 TN penalty because they can't pick up pheromones. This is a High Skill for Nezumi and a Low Skill for everybody else. *Updated from Way of the Rattling p. 52*

Skill Changes for Female Naga

The following skills have an additional Legs Emphasis for female Naga; Athletics, Defense, Dueling, Horsemanship, Jiujutsu, and Performance: Dance, Stealth, and Weapon Skills. The Legs Emphasis allows a female Naga to effectively use those skills while in her legs form. If the female Naga tries to use those skills without this Emphasis, she is treated as unskilled. This Emphasis offers no other benefit than to allow the use of those skills in legs form (see p.46 for more information on female Naga). *Inspired by Way of the Naga p.21, 52, and the 2E Player's Guide p.133.*

Kalajel

Advantages and Disadvantages

Advantages

Allies [Addendum]

The various "Interspecies Ally" Advantages (Ratling Ally, Human Ally) are built using the standard Allies mechanics from the L5R3E p.106. Nonhuman allies can have pretty much any level of devotion, but tend to have little influence (at least, from the Rokugani's point of view).
This Advantage cost 1 fewer point for Hiruma characters when purchasing Nezumi allies. This advantage cost 2 points more for Naga characters when purchasing Nezumi allies (and the reverse is also true) to represent the difficulty each race has to overcome their intolerance of each other. *Updated from Way of the Crab p.49 and Way of the Ratling p.53*

Bigjump [Physical Advantage, Nezumi Only] (3 points, 2 points for Chipped Tooth)

You may leap 50% farther and higher than normal Nezumi. This ability is common among Chipped Tooth Ratlings, who must often leap about in the rigging of ships. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.62*

Bignose [Physical Advantage, Nezumi Only] (3 points)

You can detect pheromones at double the normal range, and gain +2k0 to all Perception rolls involving scent. You may make a Hunting/Perception roll (counting the bonus cited above) to track the scent of any creature with whom you are familiar if they have passed through the same area within the last 120 minutes. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.62*

Digger [Physical Advantage, Nezumi Only] (3 points, 2 points for Grasping Paw)

You can burrow through six feet of soft earth per hour, or three feet of hard earth (such as beneath a castle wall). If combined with Sharptooth, you can burrow through a foot of stone per hour. Make a Stamina roll at a TN of 5 +5 per additional hour spent digging. When this check fails, you must rest for six hours before burrowing further. When burrowing at full speed, you leave no tunnel, though another Nezumi (or even human) could follow you closely before the tunnel collapses. Burrowing at half speed leaves a passable, if unstable tunnel. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.62*

Fur of Chipped Tooth [Inherent, Nezumi Only] (5 points, 3 points for Chipped Tooth)

This is basically the Blood of Osano-Wo Advantage (MS#2, p.62), but renamed and adapted because Nezumi do not worship Osano-Wo. Unlike Blood of Osano-Wo, it does not modify Glory, Name, or Niche. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.52*

Medium [Inherent] (5 points)

You have a deep, primal connection with the Spirit Realms, and can converse freely with the spirit of the dead. Any non-Tainted, non-living creatures or spirits of the deceased will respond favorably toward you unless you treat them with overt hostility. Additionally, you gain a Free Raise on any social rolls with any returned spirits (see the Spirit of… advantages in CoR p.14, and the Freed Yokai disadvantage below). *Updated from Fortunes and Winds p.15*

Nnich'charatha (1-5 points, Nezumi Only)

This is the Nezumi version of Kharmic Tie and means "same Name". Nezumi do not believe in kharma but they do believe that some Names are connected. It cannot be detected by Sodan-Senzo, though a shaman can sense the link by making an Intelligence/Spellcraft (Name Lore) roll TN 15. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.53*

Pearl Jiva [Inherent] (5 points per Rank, Naga only)

Some Naga are raised in the Cobra pearl bed egg-pits, but do not become jakla. Many of these retain a slight bit of magical prowess, enough to perform rudimentary magical attacks with the power of a pearl. A Naga with this advantage may destroy a pearl to perform a ranged attack (rolling Agility/Rank of this advantage) at up to 150'. The DR of this attack is equal to the Naga's Rank in this advantage, so a Naga with Pearl Jiva at Rank 2 would inflict 2k2 damage. Characters who take this advantage are given one pearl at the start of the game, but must find other pearls on their own. *Updated from Way of the Naga p.56*

Sharpears [Physical Advantage, Nezumi Only] (2 points, 1 point for Tattered Ear)

You have larger ears than normal, granting a more developed sense of hearing. You gain +2k0 to all Perception rolls involving hearing. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.62*

Shine-Shiny Eyes [Granted, Nezumi Only] (3 points, 2 points for Tattered Ear)

This advantage is mechanically identical to Benten's Blessing, though it has been renamed as the Nezumi do not acknowledge Benten. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.54*

Spirit Blood [Inherent, Human Only] (7 points)

One or both of your parents were spirits returned to the Empire through Oblivion's Gate. Although the majority of their gifts were not passed on to you, you do possess some vestige of their mystical abilities. Once per day, you may generate the effect of spending a Void Point (for a standard enhancement, a school technique, etc.) without actually spending one. It still counts as a Void Point use, and thus cannot be combined with the actual spending of another Void Point for the same effect, unless the effect specificly calls for more than one point. *Updated from Fortunes and Winds p.15*

Teeth of Stone (5 points, Nezumi Only)

This advantage is similar to Hands of Stone, except that it specifically affects damage inflicted by the Nezumi's bite attack. It stacks with Hands of Stone, for the purpose of figuring the Nezumi's bite attack's damage, if the Nezumi also purchased it. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.54*

Disadvantages

Bad Sight (2 points)

You have poor eyesight. You roll -2k0 on all sight-based Perception rolls. *Updated from Way of the Naga p.58*

Freed Yokai (4 points)

You escaped from the hellish dept of Jigoku where you were confined because of the dark deeds you performed in your former life. You begin with one full Rank of the Shadowlands Taint (1.0) and with the Dark Secret (Freed Yokai) disadvantage. You do, however, gain a Free Raise on any Shadowlands Lore, Spellcraft (maho), spellcasting rolls when casting maho spells, or when using any Low Skills. Any oni, Lost, or other natural denizens of the Shadowlands who look upon you will instantly know your true nature and attempt to destroy you in order to send your soul back where it belongs. *Updated from Fortunes and Winds p.15*

Kwa'thch (2 points, Nezumi Only)

Translated, this means "ugly as the boiling pit". This is mechanically identical to Benten's Curse, but has been renamed as the Nezumi do not acknowledge Benten. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.54*

Kalajel

Nonhuman Weapons

Chrchr

The *chrchr* (literally "stick-stick") is a special weapon designed by the Grasping Paw tribe. It looks like a normal staff but it is capped with a ceramic pot at one end. This pot contains extremely sticky resin. Before a battle, the wielder usually breaks the pot and spreads the resin over the staff using a leaf or piece of cloth, making sure to leave a small area dry so that he can safely hold the stick. The weapon is typically used to parry so that the opponent's weapon becomes stuck to the chrchr. It can also be used to slow down the opponent by gluing it to the opponent's legs. The resin remains effective for about an hour before drying and crumbling off. *Updated from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.85*

DR: 0k2

Special Rules: The chrchr has the same statistics as a bo. Spreading the resin on the staff is a Complex Action. When on the Full Defense posture, while wielding a prepared chrchr, if an opponent misses you, you may immediately make an Attack Roll, with a TN equal to the opponent's Attack Roll's result, to try and stick the chrchr to the opponent's weapon. If successful, the opponent can make a damage roll to attempt to shatter the chrchr (which has 30 Wounds), but if he fails to destroy it the chrchr becomes glued to the opponent's weapon The effects are a +10 TN penalty when attempting to use his weapon and no more than two "10" can explode on his Attack Rolls). Removing the chrchr requires a TN 20 Strength roll. It is a Complex Action that needs the character to be careful which part of the chrchr he touches.

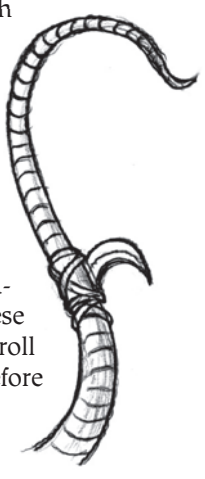
By making a successful Attack Roll with 1 Raise, the Nezumi can aim the chrchr at an opponent's legs and glue it there. The Nezumi loses his weapon, but his opponent's Water is considered to be 1 Rank lower for determining movement, and if he attempts to run, he must make an Agility roll TN 20 (+5 per additional chrchr attached) or trip and fall.

Price: N/A

Tail-Claw

This is actually a tool used by Nezumi to assist them in climbing. It is little more than a hooked shank of metal, sometimes with a sharp edge, attached to the Nezumi's tail about one-third of its length from its body. *Updated from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.86*

DR: 3k2 (but see special rules below)



Special Rules: A Ratling equipped with a tail-claw gains +2k0 on any Athletics (Climbing) or Agility rolls to maintain balance. By making a Strength roll at a TN of 15, the Nezumi can hook his tail around an outcropping (usually a tree branch) and hang upside down for a number of rounds equal to his Stamina, after which he must make additional Strength rolls every round, with a cumulative +2 TN penalty. If he fails one of these rolls, he can make a Strength/Athletics roll (without the +2k0) to pull himself up before he falls.

A Ratling that is above his target with his tail free (i.e. he is not using it to hang upside down) or performs a Mochatchikkan Leap-Over Attack (see CoR 3E, p.81) can attack with the tail-claw but without any Strength bonus to the Damage roll.

Price: N/A

Isthyr (Naga Scimitar)

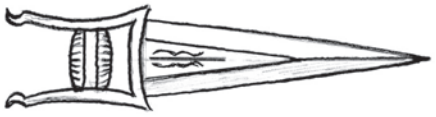
The traditional Naga blade, also called an isthyr, is remarkably similar to a katana upon first glance, with its curved, single-edge blade that is obviously designed for precision fighting. Closer inspection reveals that the curvature of the blade actually starts after a short straight length, giving the sword an appearance vaguely resembling a huge hand sickle. The blade gains thickness and weight toward the tip and the handle is designed to be easily gripped by two hands—one wrapped around the handle and one balled in a fist around the butt.

A hidden advantage of the isthyr's weight is that it is balanced well enough to be thrown (should the wielder have the strength to launch such a heavy weapon). *Updated from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.87.*

DR: 2k3

Special Rules: In the hands of a Naga (or anyone else with the Isthyr Kenjutsu Emphasis), an isthyr grants a +1k0 bonus to Initiative and Tides of Battle rolls. A character with Strength of 4 or above can throw the isthyr at a range of up to 20 feet.

Price: 50 koku



Katar

A katar is a triangular flat blade, anywhere from one to two feet in length and six to nine inches wide at the base. The weapon is best used for close combat. It is designed so that the blade points in the same direction as the fist that holds it, giving it the nickname of punching dagger. It is an ideal weapon to strike at a foe caught in the coils of a Naga's tail without the Naga risking accidentally striking himself. Skilled users wield two katars at once, using the twin weapons to devastating effect. *Updated from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.73, 88. Note : this weapon is in fact a mix of the Ivory Kingdom katar and the Naga katar. This was done simply because it seemed illogical that the same basic weapons would have two entirely different sets of game mechanics just because it is used by different people.*
DR: 0k2
Special Rules: The katar has a DR of 1k2 against unaware targets. A character with the Knives (Katar) Emphasis who wields paired katar gains +1k1 to the DR.
Price: 20 koku

Pearl Staff

Just as the Crab discovered the effectiveness of a studded, steel-shod club against the denizens of the Shadowlands, the pearl staff was made by the Naga to combat heavily armored oni. It is a wooden staff, shaped into a long cone, studded with pearls at regular intervals. Only the last foot or so of the weapon's thinner end is free of pearls. As valuable as pearls are to the Naga, these staves are made for the Slayers, an elite caste of Naga warriors whose sole purpose is to hunt down and destroy foul beasts of Jigoku. Unlike a tetsubo, these weapons are made with the Naga tactics in mind, making them lighter and more effective for darting strikes. Because of their value and how difficult they are to make, a pearl staff is entrusted only to those who are willing to sacrifice their lives to protect it. *Update from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.89*
DR: 0k3
Special Rules: In the hand of a Naga, or anyone else with the Staves (Pearl Staff) Emphasis, a pearl staff grants a +1k0 bonus to initiative and Tides of Battle rolls. A pearl staff ignores armor and reduces an opponent's Carapace by 5.
Price: N/A

Ningyo Trident

The trident employed by most Ningyo is a simple tool, consisting of a long metal pole that splits into three parallel prongs that end with a barbed point. The barbs have edged sides as well, allowing the trident to be used either as a slashing or piercing weapon. *Updated from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.90*
DR: 3k2
Special Rules: The Ningyo trident may be thrown at a distance of up to 30 feet. When underwater, this is reduced to 20 feet.
Price: 30 koku

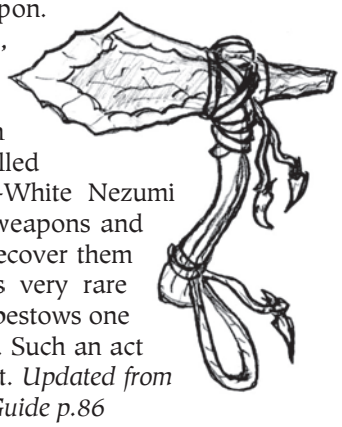
Zokujin Bludgeon

The crude stone tools currently used by the Zokujin are the last remnants of what was once their race's weapon of choice. They take a variety of forms, but can typically be described as stone hammers, maces, or simple clubs. The one remarkable feature these implements have is their incredible durability. Zokujin are longed-lived creatures and construct their tools and weapons from dense and durable materials. *Updated from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.92*
DR: 1k2
Special Rules: Zokujin bludgeons grant a Free Raise that can only be used for Extra Damage when used against stone targets. A Zokujin bludgeon ignores up to 3 points of armor bonus to the TN to Be Hit of opponents, and reduces an opponent's Carapace by 2.
Price: 5 koku

New Sacred Weapons

Green-Green-White Axe [Granted] (6)

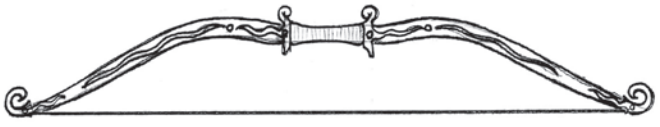
The Green-Green-White tribe has created the stone throwing axe which other tribes have tried to copy, but they remain the sole holders of the secret to create their legendary trademark weapon.



A Green-Green-White axe, while crude in appearance, is finely honed to a razor's edge and can be deadly accurate in skilled hands. The Green-Green-White Nezumi are quite proud of these weapons and will always endeavor to recover them from the battlefield. It is very rare indeed that the tribe ever bestows one of these weapons as a gift. Such an act is a sign of deepest respect. *Updated from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.86*
DR: 3k2
Special Rules: The Green-Green-White axe can be thrown at a range of up to 60 feet. When thrown, they retain their full DR. These weapons are always considered Fine Quality (see 3E p.183 or ER p.195).
Price: N/A

Sharp-Sharp Stick [Granted] (6)

Sharp-Sharp Sticks are practically indistinguishable from any other form of Ratling "pointy stick" weapon at first glance. A close inspection reveals the markings on the stick to be in an obvious pattern (which would reveal to a skilled observer that the weapon is in fact imbued with great Name), but those who have a sharp-sharp stick brandished at them hardly have the time for a more detailed look. These weapons are designed with one purpose in mind; to drive the Tainted beasts from what was once the Nezumi's homeland, and they do their job well. *Updated from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.60*
DR: as base weapon (see Special Rules below)
Special Rules: A sharp-sharp stick can be made of any crude low quality wooden weapon (such as a spear or an arrow). When used against a Tainted target, these weapons add +1k1 to the wielder's damage rolls, and damage die results of "8" or "9" are considered for all purposes to have come up "10".
Price: N/A



Serpent Bow [Granted] (2)

The greatest gift a master of Naga archery could receive was the "serpent's bow", a mix of the highest craftsmanship and magic abilities of the race. To hold such a bow was exceptionally rare, and to earn one was to be guaranteed the bow would return to your side each time you were reborn in the Akasha. *Updated from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.62*
Strength: 5
Minimum Strength: 3
Range: 600'
Special Rules: When held, increase the TN to be Hit by ranged attack of the wielder by 5.
Price: N/A

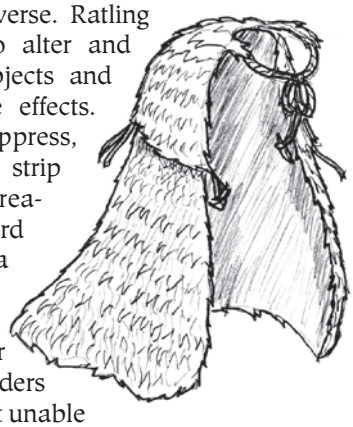
Kenku Blade [Granted] (4)

A Kenku blade is essentially a katana, albeit one of exquisite (one would be tempted to say legendary) craftsmanship and quality. They are extremely light and come across as being delicate to the untrained eye. The most famous katana in history are patterned after such blades, including the five legendary blades of Doji Yasurugi. Many believe that all Kenku blades are inherently magical, but this is not the case. *Updated from the Complete Exotic Arms Guide p.90*
DR: 3k2
Special Rules: The blade grants a +5 bonus to all Initiative and Tides of Battle rolls and +1k0 on all Kenjutsu skill rolls that does not involve a direct attack against another living being.
Price: N/A

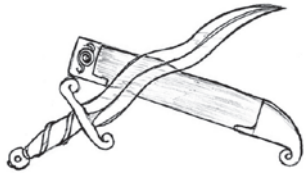
New Nemuranai

Cloak of Name

To the Nezumi, Name is the most powerful concept in the mortal and spiritual realms. It is a thing that not only defines your own being, but how your soul fits into the grand pattern of the universe. Ratling shamans use their magic to alter and manipulate the Name of objects and even other beings to create effects. Skilled shaman can suppress, enhance, or even completely strip away the Name of another creature at whim. One of the Third Whisker shamans created a great fur cloak that he infused with his own Name and gave it to the Nezumi ambassador to the human Empire. It renders those with lesser Name almost unable to ignore or even show hostility to the ambassador.



Special Rules: First, the wearer gains a Free Raise to all Awareness rolls. Secondly, any time another creature wishes to take a hostile action against the wearer, the attacker must make a contested Awareness roll against the wearer (who benefits from his Free Raise as usual). Failure indicates the attacker does not roll Initiative or make Tides of Battle rolls and instead acts last out of everyone involved in the ensuing skirmish. A creature cannot be affected more than once per day by this ability.
Price: N/A



Naga Crystal

Among the Naga, crystal weapons were exceptionally common. The Naga learned that both crystal and jade held special strength against the creatures of the darkness, but they favored crystal because it is easier to shape into weaponry. Combined with the magic of their jakla sorcerers, Naga Crystal weapons became as light and as strong as steel but were much more effective at striking down Tainted enemies than mere metal. Each able-bodied warrior carried at least one spear or blade made of the material, every jakla has a personal dagger of Naga Crystal, and many non-combatant Naga carried such a weapon just in case. Since the fall of the Naga civilization, their frequency has naturally diminished.
Special Rules: Naga Crystal weapons affect Shadowlands creatures and minions of the Shadow Dragon as if they were both jade and crystal, whichever is most favorable.
Price: N/A

Miscellaneous Nezumi Items

Bone Armor

The Nezumi not only use their enemy's tough hide when crafting their armor, they also use their bones. Of course, not any bone will do; they have to be resistant enough not to break easily when hit, yet light enough so that the armor won't be too cumbersome. The many bones must be pierced or grooved and all must be laced together with sinew and tendons in order to hold them in place, which explains why bone armor is less common than hide armor. *Homebrew*
Price: N/A

Bone Armor

Armor Type	TN Bonus	Special Rules
Light Bone Armor	+4	+5 TN to Stealth rolls
Heavy Bone Armor	+8	+10 to all physical TNs

Kappa Shell

It is not known whether Nezumi do indeed hunt kappa, but quite a few Nezumi have been spotted using kappa shell in a manner similar to a shield. Usually, the Nezumi will be walking on all fours with the shell on his back and nothing but his snout and tail sticking out, but frequently he will also use it as some Unicorn samurai do with a shield. *Homebrew*
TN Bonus: +5
Special Rules: When wearing it on their back, the shield grants the Nezumi a +15 TN Bonus instead, but it also reduces their Water Ring by 2 for the purpose of movement.
Price: N/A

Nezumi Tail Mace

This weapon is, in a way, the cousin of the tail claw. This weapon consists of a hollowed metal shell, which is often spiked with shards of rock or Nezumi teeth, with an opening in which the Nezumi inserts his tail. Inside, there's a crossbar around which the Nezumi can wrap his tail, ensuring a firm grip on the weapon. A Nezumi typically uses roughly a third off the end of his tail to hold the mace. Some of these weapons also have a leather harness which is tied around the remainder of the tail to further secure the weapon. This weapon is usually crafted from cast-off kabuto or pieces of Rokugani armor, but nezumi have also been known to use old iron pots or buckets, to the frustration of many peasants. *Homebrew*
DR: 1k2
Special Rules: Since holding this weapon considerably restricts the balancing function a of nezumi's tail, nezumi using this weapon roll one less die on all Athletics skill rolls.
Price: N/A

Song String

This strange tool consists of a length of sinew notched in such manner that it emits a high-pitched whine when rubbed against a Nezumi's tail. Unlike humans, Nezumi

can hear this high pitch. In fact, they can hear it at a distance of up to 200'. This tool is often used on missions where stealth is of the utmost importance but in which Nezumi also need to communicate with each other. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.136*
Price: N/A

Tach'ck (Poison Bag)

This device is crafted of nothing but cast-off and seemingly useless scraps of trash. The outside is made of small pieces of hide loosely tied together with bent pieces of metal or even small sticks while the inside is filled with countless bits of scrap consisting of, but not limited to, dirt, metal, bone, leaves, twigs, and wood. The purpose of such a strange contraption is to throw it at an opponent's face and take advantage of the confusion to escape. Their fragile nature means they are usually carried in a bag close to the body. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.136*
DR: N/A
Special Rules: The attack roll is done at the opponent's TN to be Hit +5 due to the slow speed of the bag and the fact that it must be aimed at the general area of the opponent's face. Any attempt by the target (or anyone else) to swat the ball out of the air will probably be successful, detonating it anyway. When the ball hits, the target can attempt a Reflexes roll – if it is higher than the total of the attack roll, he avoids the bag. If the bag bursts in his face though, the target automatically loses his next action.
Price: N/A

Tree Resin

Sometimes, Nezumi must craft things that cannot be held together with a simple wrapping of sinew or vines. For such purposes, the Nezumi harvest tree resin to be used as simple glue. The resin can be used to repair small breaks in wood and bone tools, and takes about ten to twelve hours to dry completely. The resin is not a complete fix, however – things repaired by it usually break again soon when the resin weakens. *Updated from Way of the Ratling p.138*
Special Rules: Objects repaired with tree resin add +1k0 to the duration of field repairs (see Field Repairs p.45).
Price: N/A

Kalajel

Kata

Human Kata

Bonds of the Spirit Realms

Preparation: 10 minutes
Duration: 120 minutes
This kata represents a meditative state into which a Rokugani human may enter in the presence of at least one member of a Nonhuman race. The Rokugani human prepares this kata in conjunction with a Nonhuman while the latter prepares its own Nonhuman kata. Once this mutual meditative exercise is complete, the human and Nonhuman are attuned, allowing both to better work together for a time.

Rank: Insight Rank 3
Cost: 6
Special: The human in question must prepare this kata in the direct presence of, and at the same time as, a willing, non-Tainted, Nonhuman preparing its own, Nonhuman kata. If multiple Nonhumans are preparing kata together, the human in question must select only one to be involved in this kata.
Effect: For the duration of this kata, the subject human is considered a member of the same Nonhuman race as the one with whom this kata was prepared for the purpose of the benefits and effects of the associated Nonhuman kata. Any reference to Akasha Points is replaced with Void Points. Note that this kata cannot be prepared again without ending a previous preparation of it first.
Void: None.

Naga Battle Memories

The Naga have had many battles in their long histories, and every Naga alive today has at least one vivid memory of time spent fighting on the battlefield, whether against their Naga brethren, the Ashalan, the Foul, or even the huu-mans. In time of need, a Naga can call upon such memories of warfare, called Battle Memories, if he spends time preparing for it beforehand. Basically, Naga Battle Memories are the Naga version of Kata. They work the same way as kata, except that during their preparation, the Naga is deep in meditation, contemplating his past lives' experiences on the field of battle.

Ashgara's Gift

Preparation: 20 minutes
Duration: One day
The Naga remembers a battle in which it was female and the versatility and mobility of its legs provided a beneficial advantage.

Rank: Insight Rank 2
Cost: 5
Special: Must be a female Naga
Effect: For the duration of this Memory, it takes only 180 minutes for a female Naga to swap her tail for her legs, or vice-versa. Also, while preparing this Memory, she can choose to gain a Free Raise to all Agility-based skill rolls to either her tail-bearing form or her leg-bearing form for the duration of this Memory (once made, this choice cannot be changed without ending this Memory first).
Akasha: By spending an Akasha Point during the preparation of this Memory, the swapping ritual will only take 120 minutes. After spending an Akasha Point in such a way, female Naga may choose to further reduce this time, to only 60 minutes, by taking 1k1 Wounds.

Female Naga

Female Naga have the ability to alter their physical shape, exchanging their tail for humanoid legs. This ability occurs at the onset of puberty, and females can begin using their legs almost immediately. In order to exchange her tail for her legs or reverse the process, a female Naga must spend 300 minutes (5 regular hours) in meditation.
However, this versatility comes with a downside; a female Naga must purchase the Legs Emphasis in order to use some skills while in her corresponding leg-bearing form (see p.40 for the list of skills).
Updated from Way of the Naga p.21, 52, and the 2E Player's Guide p.133.

Bonds of the Akasha

Preparation: 30 minutes
Duration: 120 minutes
The Naga remembers a battle in which morale faltered, but was later raised by a single, charismatic individual. Even though that individual was subsequently targeted and killed by the enemy in hope that the Naga would rout, his example endured, allowed the Naga army to win the day.

Rank: Naga Slayer 4, Naga Vedic 3, Naga Warrior 4
Cost: 7
Special: None.
Effect: During this Memory, the Naga only needs to spend a single Akasha Point in order to provide Encouragement to a willing Naga within 60 feet (this is following the same rules as Encouragement between humans, 3E p.165/3ER p.166, except Void Points are replaced by Akasha Points). The Naga using this Memory also gains a number of temporary Akasha Points equal to his highest rank in Great Lessons, which can only be used to

provide Encouragement. However, this strengthening of the Akashic bond between the involved Naga results in a somewhat-shared destiny. Whenever a Naga encouraged in this way is wounded, the Naga who used this Memory to provide that Encouragement takes 1 Wound.
Akasha: None.

Coiled and Ready

Preparation: 10 minutes
Duration: 120 minutes
The Naga remembers a difficult battle, in which the terrain greatly hindered the Naga and during which they had to stand coiled for an unusually long period of time. The Memory creates a reserve of strength from which the Naga will be able to draw, in order to remain coiled for long periods of time.

Rank: Insight Rank 1
Cost: 2
Special: None.
Effect: For the duration of this Memory, the Naga gains +2k2 on Strength rolls made to remain coiled and also gains a Free Raise on Attack rolls made while in the coiled position. Remaining coiled for lengthy periods requires considerable effort, so all damage rolls while coiled are made with a -2k0 penalty.
Akasha: None.

Coiling

The Naga are able to coil their massive tail beneath them, heaving their bulk above an obstacle so that they can attack or see beyond it. The maximum height a Naga can attain while coiled is equal to 2/3 of their total length. For example, a Greensnake, which averages 10 to 15 feet in length, could coil to a height of up to 6 to 10 feet. Coiling oneself requires no roll but is a Complex Action, and no grapple can be initiated while coiled. Female Naga cannot coil while in their leg-bearing form.
A Naga may attack during the same round in which it coiled, but doing so requires 2 Raises. Also, at the beginning of its turn every following rounds, the Naga must make a successful Strength roll at a TN of 5, +5 per round that the Naga has been coiled, in order to successfully remain coiled. A towering coiled Naga attacking from above a shorter opponent (such as a human or a Nezumi) is considered to be attacking from Higher Ground (and its opponent is fighting from Lower Ground).
Updated from Way of the Naga p.53

Coils of the Constrictor

Preparation: 10 minutes
Duration: 90 minutes
The Naga remembers a skirmish in which it had to grapple a dangerous foe in order to save the lives of its brethren. Upon completion of the preparation, the Naga increases in muscle mass and in length by approximately 20%, allowing it to grab and crush enemies in its deadly coils.

Rank: Naga Scout 2, Naga Slayer 2, Naga Vedic 1, Naga Warrior 2
Cost: 2
Special: None.
Effect: During this Memory, the Naga adds +(Earth)k0 to his Grapple damage rolls. However, this increased mass makes it slower and a more obvious target, lowering his TN to Be Hit by 5 and causing a -2k0 penalty on Stealth rolls.
Akasha: None.

Fighting with No Eyes

Preparation: 20 minutes
Duration: 180 minutes
The Naga remembers a battle fought in complete darkness, away from the gaze of both the Pale and Bright Eyes.

Rank: Naga Jakla 3, Naga Slayer 3, Naga Vedic 3, Naga Warrior 2
Cost: 6
Special: None.
Effect: During this Memory, the Naga ignores half of the penalties (rounded down) for darkness and poor illumination. In addition, all ranged attacks made by the Naga receive a Free Raise that can only be used for called shots.
Akasha: None.

Of One Stone

Preparation: 30 minutes
Duration: 120 minutes
The Naga remembers many battles fought in many past lives. In each of these past lives, the Naga was a member of a different Bloodline.

Rank: Naga Jakla 3, Naga Scout 3, Naga Slayer 3, Naga Vedic 2, Naga Warrior 3.
Cost: 5
Special: None.
Effect: The Naga chooses one Bloodline Ability he does not possess. He gains this Bloodline Ability, replacing his own, for the duration of this Battle Memory. If this Battle Memory is used by a Greensnake, or to gain the Greensnake's Bloodline Ability, it will only affect the Free Raise granted to Social rolls with humans, not the bonus skill points gained.
Akasha: By spending an Akasha Point while preparing this Memory, the Naga can either retain his own Bloodline Ability or select two different Bloodline Abilities.

Pillars of Blood

Preparation: 35 minutes
Duration: 180 minutes
The Naga remembers a battle in which he stood side-by-side with his kin, fighting, bleeding and dying together, but ultimately triumphing together over their enemies.

Rank: Naga Warrior 4
Cost: 6
Special: Must be performed with polearms or spears
Effect: While this Memory is active, the Naga gain +1k1 on all Attack rolls. Also, if the Naga is in the Full Defense

posture, he can, when targeted by an attack, make a contested Agility/Weapon Skill roll against the attacker's Attack roll. If successful, the Naga weaves and dodges the attack completely, taking no damage even if the attacker's roll would have beaten its TN to Be Hit, and the Naga may gain +1k1 on his Tides of Battle roll this round. If in mass battle, the Naga adds or subtracts his Rank in his primary Great Lessons to or from all Mass Battle Table rolls instead. However, the Naga is so taken by the frenzy of battle that it suffers 1 Wound at the end of every round in which it either attacked or was attacked.
Akasha: By spending an Akasha Point while preparing this Memory, the Naga gains +1k0 to its initiative rolls. By spending two Akasha Points while preparing this Memory, the Naga can grant +1k1 on Attack rolls to a number of allied Naga equal to his Akasha, as long as they remain within 50 feet and also wield polearms or spears (allied Naga may not benefit from more than 1 such Memory at a time).

Venom of the Asp

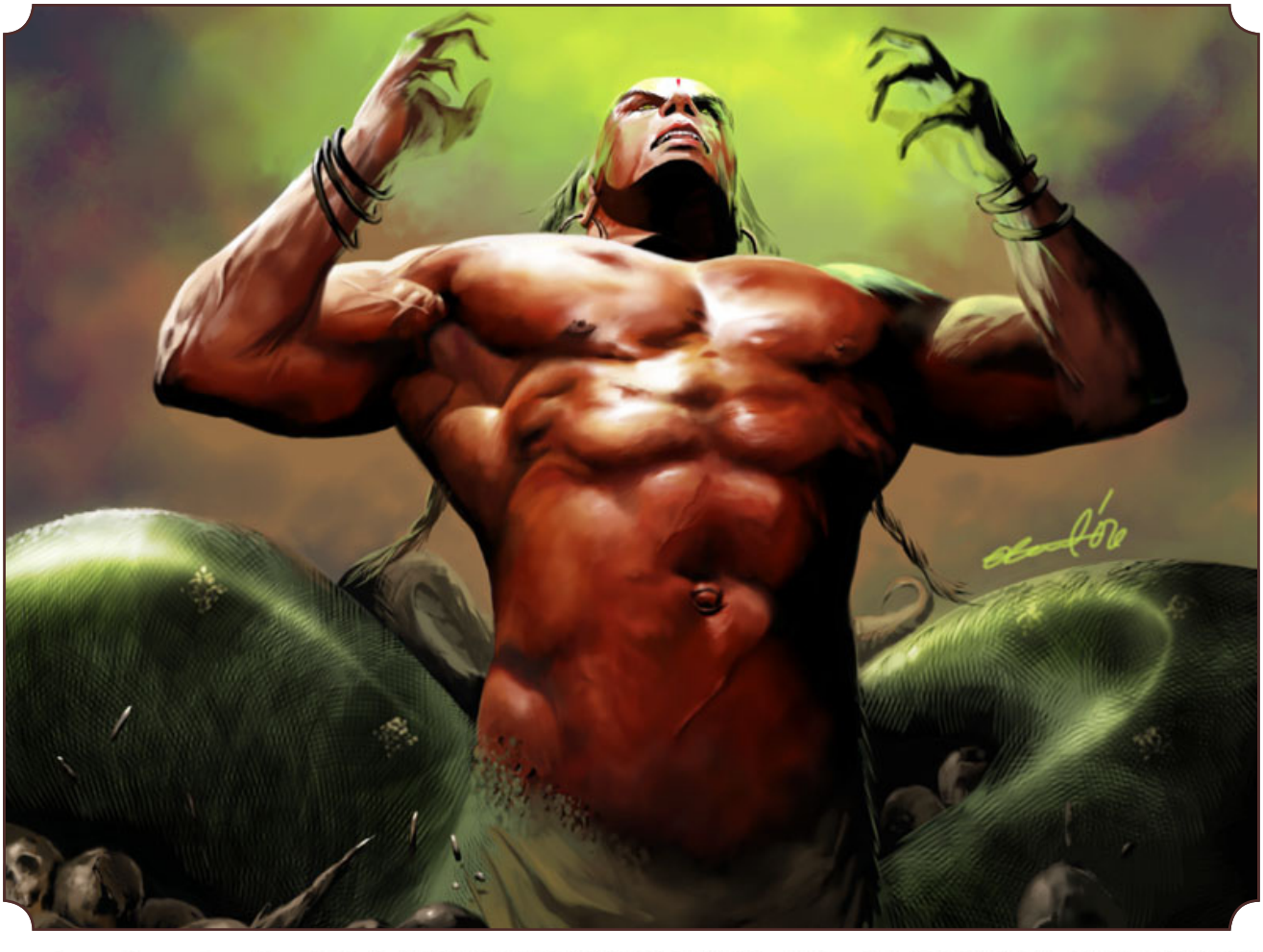
Preparation: 10 minutes
Duration: 90 minutes
The Naga remembers a battle in which he slew many enemies using his poisonous bite as a deadly weapon.

Rank: Naga Scout 2, Naga Slayer 1, Naga Warrior 2
Cost: 5
Special: Must possess at least one level of the Venom advantage.
Effect: During this Memory, the Naga's Venom Rank is considered 1 higher. This lasts until the first successful ensuing use of the Venom Attack or the Memory's duration coming to an end, whichever comes first.
Akasha: By spending an Akasha Point while preparing this Memory, it will last until the second successful ensuing use of the Venom Attack or the Memory's duration coming to an end, whichever comes first.

Voices of the Akasha

Preparation: 10 minutes
Duration: One day
The Naga remembers a hard-fought battle that lasted many days, during which, in spite of terrible losses and many reversals, the Naga were able to finally prevail over their enemies. Many Naga performed heroic deeds and sacrificed themselves to eke out the narrowest of victories.

Rank: Insight Rank 3
Cost: 6
Special: Akasha 4 or more.
Effect: This Memory is the Naga's version of Striking as Void (3E p.194/3ER p.205). It allows the Naga to prepare two additional Battle Memories. See the Striking as Void kata from 3ER for more details. Note: the character does not need to know the four Striking as Elements kata; the only restriction is to possess Akasha 4 or more.
Akasha: None.



Wrath of the Pale Eye

Preparation: 20 minutes
Duration: 90 minutes
The Naga remembers past battles against sworn enemies of the Naga race and brings forth the fury it felt during those battles.

Rank: Naga Slayer 2 or Naga Warrior 3
Cost: 6
Special: None.
Effect: During this Memory, the Naga generates a Fear Rating equal to his Akasha Ring that affects all non-Naga within 10 feet per Rank in Great Lessons he possesses. During this time, the Naga is so absorbed by his fury that he rolls 1 less die on all Awareness and Perception rolls he makes.
Akasha: By spending an Akasha Point while preparing this Memory, you may choose a number of non-Naga allies equal to your Insight Rank to be immune to the effects of this Memory.

A'Rtch'Kan (Nezumi Tricks)

With their very poor memory and general lack of self-discipline, it may seem surprising that Nezumi have their own version of kata, the A'Rtch'Kan (or Sunlit-Clever-Tricks/Skills). However, these are not true 'kata' as the concept would be understood by Rokugani; they are actually instinctual responses and natural abilities honed by years of survival in harsh conditions. In practice, they differ from Rokugani kata in two important ways. First, these "Tricks" have no preparation time. However, the Nezumi must first succeed at an Intelligence check, as if trying to remember something important (Raw Intelligence roll TN 15, see CoR3E p.63). Second, a Nezumi can only make use of Tricks a number of times per day equal to its Void Ring. However, they are not limited to using only one Trick at a time. So, for example, a Nezumi with a Void Ring of 3, who knows 4 different Tricks, could decide to use 3 of them at the same time (provided, of course, it succeeded on its Remembering roll for each Trick). Note, however, that it would not be able to use any more Tricks for the rest of that day, as it had already spent the 3 uses allowed by its Void Ring. Also note that only one instance of a particular Trick can be active at any given time.

Cunning Tail

Duration: 60 minutes
This Trick allows the Nezumi to use his tail as another "hand", holding and benefiting from an additional Memory Stick.

Rank: Rememberer 2
Cost: 4
Special: None.
Effect: During this Trick, the Nezumi can benefit from an additional Memory Stick by holding it in its tail. The Nezumi cannot use his tail for anything else or run on all fours while holding a Memory Stick in this fashion. If he does so, this Trick immediately ends.

Dance in Dreams

Duration: 180 minutes
This potent Trick is highly prized among shamans. The shaman focuses the power of his Name in order to offset some of the constraints and efforts associated with casting Name Magic.

Rank: Shaman 3
Cost: 4
Special: A Shaman may double the duration of this Trick by taking 4 points of Bleeding damage (see Name Magic in CoR p.72).
Effect: While this Trick is active, the Shaman gains 1 Free Raise on all Performance/Dance (Mee-i'thich) rolls. Also, if casting a spell with the Dance requirement while this Trick is active, all Dance durations are halved (as long as the new Dancing duration fits fully within the Trick's duration). Or, if a spell has the Bleeding requirement, it can be replaced with the Dancing requirement instead, with a duration equal to half of the Bleeding damage in hours (this duration is not halved by this Trick and must fit within the Trick's duration). So if the Bleeding damage is 2, for example, the required replacement Dance duration is 1 hour.

Fighting Tomorrow

Duration: 30 minutes
This Trick allows the Nezumi to fight with the desperation and fury that the last Nezumi will need if he is to defeat Tomorrow.

Rank: Berserker 3, Chieftain-General 4, Scout 4, or Warrior 3
Cost: 7
Special: None.
Effect: For this Trick's duration, the Nezumi adds his Athletics Skill Rank to his Attack rolls and adds +1k0 to its damage rolls. Also, the Nezumi's TN to be Hit is increased by 10 against opponents with lower Initiative than it.

Leap of the Chitatchikkan

Duration: 90 minutes
This Trick enhances the Nezumi's leaping ability, allowing it to make seemingly impossible offensive leaps against its opponents in battle.

Rank: Berserker 2 or Warrior 3
Cost: 3
Special: Must be able to perform the Leap-Over Motchatchikkan maneuver.
Effect: For the duration of this Trick, the Nezumi may add his Insight Rank to the Agility/Athletics roll made to perform the Leap-Over maneuver, as well as to the Initiative bonus it grants.

Racing Tomorrow

Duration: 120 minutes
This Trick draws upon the skills and cunning Nezumi have relied on for centuries in order to survive.

Rank: Scout 3 or Scrounger 3
Cost: 5
Special: None.
Effect: The Nezumi gains +1k0 on the following skill rolls: Athletics (Climbing), Hunting, Investigation (Scrounging), Stealth, and Sleight of Hand. Alternatively, the Nezumi can choose to gain a +2k0 on only 3 of those skill rolls while in a wilderness setting. This choice of Skill rolls affected is made when the Trick is started, and once made, it cannot be changed without ending the Trick and starting it again.

Remember Yesterday

Duration: 30 minutes
This Trick somehow allows the Nezumi to importune or channel the Transcendants, in order to tap into a collective, racial memory.

Rank: Chieftain-General 4, Rememberer 3, Shaman 4
Cost: 8
Special: None.
Effect: For the duration of this Trick, the Nezumi automatically remembers any information that would normally be subject to an Intelligence roll to remember. This Trick also grants a Free Raise on any other Intelligence-based rolls.

Run-Run, Flee!

Duration: 120 minutes
Many Nezumi consider running away to be very brave; after all, if you run away today, you will live to fight for what is important—the Tribe, the warren, the pups—another day. The Nezumi have developed this trick to allow them to be very, very brave.

Rank: Insight Rank 1
Cost: 3
Special: None.
Effect: The Nezumi's maximum movement is increased by 10 feet per round, or by 20 feet if running on all fours with nothing in his paws. This trick ends if the Nezumi performs an attack.

Nezumi Movement

Perceptive readers might have noticed that the Nezumi movement rates on p.63 of *Creatures of Rokugan* seem rather low compared to the average Rokugani samurai. This seems to have been a copy/paste issue from *Second Edition*, as Nezumi used to be faster than humans in previous editions.
To correct this, it is suggested that Nezumis' maximum movement per round be calculated as Water Ring x10 +5 feet per round and running on all fours becomes the equivalent of the Run action (Water Ring x20 +10 feet).

Striking as Name

Duration: 60 minutes
The Nezumi taps into the strength of his Name, allowing him to inflict terrible wounds on creatures of the reviled darkness.

Rank: Warrior 1
Cost: 2
Special: None.
Effect: During this Trick, the Nezumi adds his Name Rank to all damage rolls made against Shadowlands creatures, minions of the Shadow Dragon or the Lying Darkness, or any individual corrupted by one or both.

The Tribe is One

Duration: 120 minutes
This Trick strengthens the bonds among Nezumi, allowing the tribe to work more effectively as a group.

Rank: Builder 2, Chieftain-General 1, or Scrounger 2
Cost: 3
Special: None.
Effect: During this Trick, instead of making a Skill roll (including an Attack roll), the Nezumi may use the result of a roll total made since his last turn by another allied Nezumi. The Skill roll must have used the same Trait and Skill (the user of this Trick must possess at least 1 rank in the Skill), it must have been successful, and the allied Nezumi must have been within sight of the Nezumi using this Trick. However, when the user of this Trick is not borrowing roll totals, all his own Skill rolls suffer a -1k0 penalty.

Shapeshifters Kata

Shapeshifters have developed kata-like abilities inspired by the Rokugani kata. However, they are not actually kata in the Rokugani sense of the word, and are called such simply for lack of a better word.

Child of the Mist

Preparation: 30 minutes
Duration: 360 minutes
Shapeshifters who master this kata can obtain a greater control over their body and transformations.

Rank: Shapeshifter School 1
Cost: 2
Special: None
Effect: For the duration of this kata, the Shapeshifter gains a number of additional free shape changes for the day equal to his Water Ring. However, once those are spent and a Raw Earth roll is required for subsequent attempts, the initial TN starts at 10 instead of 5.

Cloak of Mortality

Preparation: 60 minutes
Duration: 240 minutes
Creatures not native to Ningen-do are always in danger of losing their spiritual nature, and in order to prevent

this, they usually adopt restrictions called "taboos" in order to avoid becoming human. This kata cloaks the Shapeshifter in a false "mortality", in order to lessen the restrictive taboos he would normally face in Ningen-do.

Rank: Shapeshifter School 3
Cost: 5
Special: None.
Effect: For the duration of this kata, the Shapeshifter can attempt a Test of Honor at a TN of 20 to avoid losing his powers when violating a taboo. However, even falsely emulating the mortality of Humans slightly erodes the Shapeshifter's spiritual nature; during the duration of this kata, he cannot use his highest Mastery Level Spirit Powers.

Entice the Kami

Preparation: 10 minutes
Duration: 60 minutes
Shapeshifters are highly magical in nature, but in a way that is essentially alien to Ningen-do. This kata better attunes the Shapeshifter to the fabric of Ningen-do for a short time, allowing him to more readily commune with the kami to produce spell-like effects.

Rank: Insight Rank 2
Cost: 4
Special: Must know at least 1 Spirit Power which allows you to cast a spell as a shugenja (such as False Shadows or Kami Tongue).
Effect: For the duration of this kata, when casting spells granted by Spirit Powers, the Shapeshifter's "shugenja rank" is considered to be 1 rank higher and he gets a Free Raise on his spellcasting rolls.

Spiritual Fortitude

Preparation: 20 minutes
Duration: 180 minutes
Some spiritual powers possessed by Shapeshifters can put a great strain on their being. This Kata lessens such strain.

Rank: Insight Rank 2
Cost: 5
Special: Must know at least 1 Spirit Power which causes Wounds to yourself when using it (such as Flight or Spirit Fire).
Effect: While this kata is active, the total number of Wounds the Shapeshifter suffers while using powers that wound him is reduced by his Insight Rank, to a minimum of 1 Wound. In the case of the Flight power, Wounds begin to be suffered after a number of minutes of flight equal to the Shapeshifter's Insight Rank.

Spiritual Potency

Preparation: 10 minutes
Duration: 90 minutes
Rather than attempting to blend in or become more attuned to the basic fabric of Ningen-do, a Shapeshifter can, instead, accentuate the difference between his own fundamental nature and that of the mortal realm. This allows him to temporarily increase the potency of abilities granted to him by his spiritual nature.

Rank: Insight Rank 1
Cost: 3
Special: None.
Effect: During this kata, the Shapeshifter gains a Free Raise on any rolls to which his Shapeshifter Race grants a bonus (whether by granting extra dice, Free Raises, or by adding some value to the totals of the rolls). However, his spiritual nature becomes slightly more evident; while this kata is active, any effect or ability which would detect or discern a creature with Spirit qualities has any relevant TN reduced by 5.

Kalajel

Spells

Naga Spells

Building From Strength

Any element, Mastery Level 1
Duration: See text
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

By casting this spell, the Jakla attunes the elements within himself allowing him to cast spells more readily and easily. This spell lasts until the Jakla casts another spell, at which point the Jakla bases that spell on any one element of his choosing. The spell is cast using the chosen elemental Ring, and any Ring-dependent effects are also based on the chosen Ring. *Updated from City of Lies p.43*

The Pearl of Air

Air spell, Mastery Level 2
Duration: 1 hour
Area of Effect: 1 target
Range: 30'

This spell allows the Jakla to awaken the natural energies dormant in a creature to give it resistance against magic. The TN of all spells cast upon the target is increased by 5.
Special Raises: Each Raise taken to this effect can increase the magic resistance by 5. *Updated from Way of the Naga p.120*

The Pearl of Combat

Fire spell, Mastery Level 3
Duration: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 target
Range: 50'

This spell allows a Jakla to increase the combat effectiveness of a creature. The affected creature gains +2k0 on its attack roll, which becomes a +1k1 bonus when performing the Full Attack maneuver. *Updated from Way of the Naga p.120*

The Pearl of Defense

Air spell, Mastery Level 3
Duration: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 target
Range: 50'

This spell allows a Jakla to increase the defensive capabilities of a creature. This spell adds 5 to the target's TN to be Hit. When performing the Full Defense maneuver, this becomes a +1k1 added to the target's Defense skill roll (and counts as a rank of the Defense skill for the purpose of unskilled rolls). *Updated from Way of the Naga p.120*

The Pearl of Movement

Air spell, Mastery Level 5
Duration: 1 round
Area of Effect: 1 target
Range: 100'

This spell allows a Jakla to lend a creature unique speed, giving it improved reaction time when engaged in battle. This spell doubles the target's Reflexes for the purpose of initiative. It also gives +1k1 to the target's Tides of Battle rolls. *Updated from Way of the Naga p.120*

The Pearl of Strength

Earth spell, Mastery Level 3
Duration: Full Concentration plus 1 minute
Area of Effect: 1 target
Range: 50'

This spell allows a Jakla to increase the life-force of a creature, allowing it to withstand more injuries in battle. The target's Earth Ring is considered one higher for the purpose of figuring out Wounds. The target suffers the full effects of any Wounds taken when the spell wears off.
Special Raises: Each Raise taken to modify the spell's duration lengthens or shortens it by 1 round. You can take one Raise to reduce the Concentration level to Casual. *Updated from Way of the Naga p.120*

The Pearl of Water

Water spell, Mastery Level 1
Duration: 30 minutes
Area of Effect: 1 target
Range: 30'

This spell gives a creature the ability to breathe underwater as though it had gills. This spell is often used by Naga Jakla when visiting their Ningyo allies. *Updated from Way of the Naga p.120*

The Pearl of Wisdom

Fire spell, Mastery Level 2
Duration: 1 minute
Area of Effect: Self
Range: Self

This spell allows a Jakla to gain sudden insight on a matter at hand. This spell grants 2 ranks of any one Lore

skill or the Investigation skill. Once made, the choice of skill cannot be changed until the spell is recast.
Special Raises: Raises can be taken to increase the number of skill ranks granted in one skill on a 1 for 1 basis. *Updated from Way of the Naga p.120*

Strike Blind

Water spell, Mastery Level 1
Duration: Caster's Air or Akasha Ring in rounds
Area of Effect: 1 target
Range: 100'

This spell robs a target of his sense of sight, leaving it blinded (+40 TN to sight-based rolls) temporarily.
Special Raises: Each Raise taken to increase the spell's duration lengthens it by 1 round. *Updated from City of Lies p.43*

Spirit Realms Spells

Detect Passage

Any element, Mastery Level 4
Duration: Full Concentration
Area of Effect: Self
Range: 100' radius

This spell enhances your natural senses, extending them into all the Spirit Realms simultaneously. As long as you concentrate, you can sense the presence and location of any natural passage to other Spirit Realms within the area. With a successful Void roll against a TN of 20, you can determine which Spirit Realm the passage leads to. At the GM's discretion, particularly unstable or dangerous passages may have a higher TN. *Updated from Fortunes and Winds p.10*

Passage into Chaos

Water spell, Mastery Level 5
Duration: Instantaneous
Area of Effect: Caster and up to two creatures within range
Range: 20'

This spell activates any existing passages to Chikushudo or Sakkaku, sending all those affected by the spell to the designated Realm immediately (if the passage connects to both Realms, the caster must choose which Realm is the destination). Unwilling creatures must make a Contested Water roll against the caster to avoid being taken along. Using this spell blindly is not recommended; if the caster is not aware of where he is going, and the portal to a jealous Realm is in the vicinity, he may find himself irrevocably pulled into that Realm.
Special Raises: For each Raise made, the caster can bring one additional creature along. *Updated from Fortunes and Winds p.10*

Advanced "Detect Passage" Rules

Detect Passage can be cast as a spell of any element of the shugenja's choice. If cast normally, it will detect any passage. However, if the shugenja is looking for a specific kind of passage, he can cast it as a spell of the appropriate element (see Table below), which will increase the radius to 200' but the spell will not detect passages to any other Realm than the specific one the shugenja is seeking. *Homebrew*

Element	Corresponding Spirit Realms
Air	Yume-do or Tengoku
Earth	Gaki-do or Jigoku
Fire	Meido, Toshigoku or Maigo no Musha
Water	Chikushudo or Sakkaku
Void	Ningen-do or Yomi*

*Kitsu Sodan-Senzo can cast Detect Passage to specifically locate passages to Yomi as a Water spell instead of Void.

Passage into Darkness

Earth spell, Mastery Level 5

As Passage into Chaos, except that this spell activates passages to Gaki-do or Jigoku. Unwilling creatures must make a Contested Earth roll against the caster to avoid being taken along.
Anyone with at least one Rank of Taint (1.0) may learn and cast this as a Mastery level 4 maho spell (which still uses the Earth Ring to cast). *Updated from Fortunes and Winds p.11*

Passage into Death

Fire spell, Mastery Level 5

As passage into Chaos, except that this spell activates passages to Meido or Toshigoku. Some shugenja scholars believe it could also activate passages to Maigo no Musha, but this Realm is so new and poorly known that it is hard to ascertain (in other words, this is left at the Gamemaster's discretion). Unwilling creatures must make a Contested Fire roll against the caster to avoid being taken along. *Updated from Fortunes and Winds p.11*

Passage into Dream

Air spell, Mastery Level 5

As passage into Chaos, except that this spell activates passages to Yume-do or Tengoku. Unwilling creatures must make a Contested Air roll against the caster to avoid being taken along. *Updated from Fortunes and Winds p.11*

Passage into Harmony [Ancestor]

Any element, Mastery Level 5

As passage into Chaos, except that this spell activates passages to Ningen-do or Yomi. Unwilling creatures must make a Contested Void roll against the caster to

avoid being taken along. A Kitsu Sodan-Senzo may learn and cast this spell as a Mastery Level 4 Ancestor Spell. *Updated from Fortunes and Winds p.11*

Shadowbinding

Earth spell, Mastery Level 1
Duration: 1 Day (or 1 Day per School Rank, see below)
Area of Effect: One creature's shadow
Range: 50'

This is a Crab Clan secret spell. This spell was designed by Kuni Ikashi to allow a caster to take control of a single creature's shadow for a day, and animate it harmlessly in order to provide amusement and entertainment to the troops on the Wall or to scare away cowardly goblins. It was by sheer happenstance that the spell was tested on a mujina's shadow and proved to be very effective at controlling them. The caster may control the targeted mujina for a number of days equal to his School Rank. Controlled mujina will not obey any orders that threaten their own safety, including entering combat. *Updated from Fortunes and Winds p.46*

Kalajel

Kitsu Spiritual Abilities

The following abilities are only available to members of the Kitsu family. All have Insight or School Ranks requirements that must be met before a character may take them. Only Kitsu shugenja characters may acquire these abilities.

The more Kitsu Spiritual Abilities a character takes, the more they resemble their leonine brethren. Just one ability will cause the character's hair and eyes to become a red-golden color (if they were not already). More abilities cause the character's facial features to become increasingly feline, though even at its most extreme this effect is very subtle.

These abilities may be purchased with experience points once a character fulfills all the necessary requirements. *Updated from Secrets of the Lion p.92*

Sense the Rift

You are attuned to the presence of all passages into the Spirit Realms, and can locate them wherever they may be.

Requirements: Sodan-Senzo Rank 1 or Kitsu Shugenja Rank 3
Cost: 3
Effect: You gain the spell Detect Passage (see above) as an Innate Ability, and receive 2 Free Raises when casting this spell.

Touch of Crystal

Your attacks, both magical and mundane, can damage creatures normally invulnerable to any damage except that caused by jade or crystal.

Requirements: Sodan-Senzo Rank 3 or Kitsu Shugenja Rank 5
Cost: 5
Effect: You exist in harmony with your spiritual heritage, suffusing your being with the pure energy of the Spirit Realms. All of your attacks against spirit creatures (including spirits who exist physically in other realms, such as oni and Tsuno) count as if they were crystal and/or jade (whichever is more effective). This includes all magical attacks, such as spells, as well as regular melee or ranged attacks.

Spirit-Walker

You may move between the various Spirit Realms at will.

Requirements: Sodan-Senzo Rank 5 or Kitsu Shugenja Insight Rank 8
Cost: 7
Effect: Choose one of the following spells: Passage into Chaos, Passage into Darkness, Passage into Death, Passage into Dream, or Passage into Harmony (see above). You gain this spell as an Innate Ability and gain 2 Free Raises whenever casting it.
Special: You may take this ability multiple times, selecting a different spell each time.

The Beast Within

You may summon forth the spirit of your ancestral heritage and cause it to manifest physically, transforming you into the powerful form of a living Kitsu.

Requirement: Sodan-Senzo Insight Rank 6
Cost: 7
Effect: You have mastered the most intimate secrets of your inhuman blood and can summon it forth to manifest in the physical realm. At will, you may transform your physical body into that of a Kitsu, retaining all you abilities and gaining those of your new form in addition to its physical abilities. You retain your original Rings and Traits, or use those of a typical True Kitsu, whichever is better (see *Creatures of Rokugan* p.126 for the Kitsu's stats).

Kalajel

Naga Dojo

Purple Scales Dojo

Location: Shinomen Tower
Schools: Moto Bushi, Shinjo Bushi, Naga Warrior, Naga Scout
Paths: Junghar Defender, Naga Hunters, Temple Guardian
Benefit: A human character can now spend two Void Points to give a Naga ally an Akasha Point via encouragement (see 3E p.165, 3ER p.166) and vice versa.

When the Naga returned to the Great Sleep, the Unicorn assumed the duty of watching over their cities with the help of a few Naga soldiers who remained awake. This dojo was founded to foster good relations between the Naga and Unicorn, while allowing humans and Naga to learn how to better protect the sleeping Naga together.

Black Pearl Temple

Location: Candas
Schools: Naga Jakla, Ningyo Shoqan (Shugenja)
Benefit: Choose one of your starting Water spells. This spell becomes an Innate Ability.

Named after the legendary black pearls that appear once every generation in the Naga pearl beds, this spellcasting school specializes in Water magic and in ways to facilitate spellcasting underwater.

Kalajel

Naga Past Lives (Ancestors)

Because of their collective souls, Naga do not possess Ancestors. Instead, they can recall their past lives and benefit from past experiences in a manner similar to a shiryo granting its guidance to its descendants. Overall, Naga Past Lives use rules similar to those of Rokugani Ancestors, except that Past Lives will work regardless of Bloodline and that Naga characters may purchase multiple Past Lives (as many as they want), but with an increased cost. Past Lives are available only to Naga characters and Naga characters may never purchase a Rokugani Ancestor.

Step One: Concept

In this step, the player decides if he wants his Past Life to be a Duty of Blood (part of the soul of a past Naga), or a Named Personality (the reincarnation of a past Naga's soul). This decision will dictate how to proceed in Step Two and Three. Both Duties and Personalities must be developed in the same way as a Rokugani Ancestor.

Step Two and Three: Profession and Drive

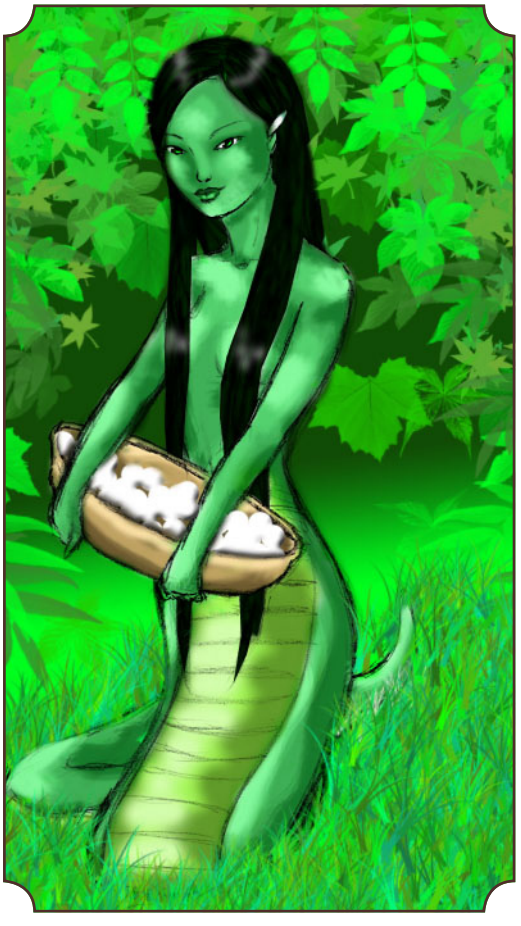
This is where the main difference between Naga Past Lives and Rokugani Ancestors occurs. First, Naga Past Lives have no Profession or Drive, but only Soulparts. A Soulpart is similar to Profession and Drive, but is also much more. Each Soulpart represents one aspect of a particular past life. When a Naga player creates a Past Life, he picks a number of Soulparts that depends on whether he is building a Duty of Blood or a Named Personality.

Duty of Blood: A Duty of Blood can represent many aspects of Naga life, from a position held, to a profession practiced, to a drive that dictated the actions of the past Naga. When creating a Duty of Blood, the Naga player picks a single Soulpart. Duties cost half the normal number of points to increase with Devotion (if the Soulpart selected can be increased) but are limited to Rank 3 and Devotion cannot be increased after character creation.

Named Personality: Named Personalities are much like Rokugani Ancestors, in that they represent a single individual. However, instead of representing the guidance of an honored ancestor, a Named Personality represents the reincarnation, almost in full, of the persona of a past Naga. Like Ancestors, a given Personality may give different benefits depending on which period of its life the Past Life represent. Unlike Ancestors, individual Named Personalities may not be simultaneously shared by more than two or three Naga, at most. When creating a Named Personality, the Naga player picks two different Soulparts, as if he were building a normal Rokugani Ancestor. Exactly one of the two Soulparts must possess the Named Personality attribute (they are noted below as "NP"). When combined, these Soulparts define the Past Life's distinct personality, outlook, and unique experiences. Characters linked to such Named Personalities have a notable lineage within the communal Naga ancestry and are, therefore, treated with much more respect

than the norm. This translates into an extra point of Caste per Rank of the Past Life.

Naga can only benefit from one Past Life's counsel (i.e., mechanical effects) at a time. If a Naga character possesses multiple Past Lives, to switch focus from one to another, he must either spend an Akasha Point, or 60 minutes in meditation, and then make a successful Akasha/Theology (Moksha) Roll at a TN of 15 +5 per Past Life he possesses.



Soulparts

The following Ancestor Professions can be used as Soulparts for Naga Past Lives: Archer[2], Artisan, Berserker[3], Daimyo, Hatamoto[1], Karo[1], Liaison[3], Merchant[2], Philosopher[2], Scholar, Scribe[1], Seer[1], and Sumotori[1].

The following Ancestor Drives can be used as Soulparts for Naga Past Lives: Ambition, Brashness[2], Compassion, Courage, Courtesy, Curiosity[2], Gossip[1], Jealousy[1], Judgement, Justice, Passion, Perfection[1], Piety[2], Sacrifice, Sincerity, Strife[1], Vanity[1], and Vengeance.

Note: [1] in *Musha Shugyo* #1, [2] in *Musha Shugyo* #2, [3] in *Musha Shugyo* #3.

Abomination Hero: In your past life, you were a famous Abomination who won acceptance back into the Naga community. Once per day, you may spend an Akasha Point in order to roll on the Advantageous Mutation Table (CoR p.31) and gain the benefit of this mutation for 60 minutes. Alternatively, you may spend 2 Akasha Point instead and choose one mutation which you will benefit for 30 minutes. This Soulpart cannot be improved with Devotion.

Abomination Villain: In your past life, you were an Abomination who was shunned by the Naga and came to resent them deeply for it. Roll twice on the Negative Mutation Table, keeping the result you prefer. You also gain 2 extra dice on all Deceit (Intimidation) rolls. This Soulpart cannot be improved with Devotion.

Asp: You were a prominent member of the Asp Bloodline in one of your past lives. You gain 2 more Wounds per Wound Rank.

Chameleon: You were a prominent member of the Chameleon Bloodline in one of your past lives. You gain an extra die on all Stealth and Acting (Disguise) rolls.

Child of the Bright Eye: During one of your past lives, you were a Vedic of the Bright Eye: a priest, guide, and scholar to your people. This is the same as the Monk Profession, except that the chosen skill must come from the Naga Vedic School.

Child of the Pale Eye: During one of your past lives, you were a Vedic of the Pale Eye, an upholder of the laws of the Naga people. This is the same as the Magistrate Profession.

Cobra: You were a prominent member of the Cobra Bloodline in one of your past lives. Whenever you spend an Akasha Point on a Pearl Magic roll or a Lore Skill roll, you add 3 to the total of these rolls, in addition to the usual benefits of spending an Akasha Point.

Constrictor: You were a prominent member of the Constrictor Bloodline in one of your past lives. You roll +2k0 on all Grapple rolls.

Courtier [addendum]: These additional Character Points can also be combined with the bonus Character Points granted by the Greensnake Bloodline for the purpose of purchasing Allies.

Dashmar (NP): During one of your past lives, you were The Dashmar; ruler of the city of Nirukti and its Greensnake population. This is the same as the Administrator Profession.

Duelist [addendum]: Reference to the Iaijutsu Skill should be replaced with the Dueling Skill.

Greensnake: You were a prominent member of the Greensnake Bloodline in one of your past lives. You gain the Language advantage for a non-Naga language for free, as well as a Free Raise on all Social Skill rolls involving anyone who can understand that language.

Isha (NP): During one of your past lives, you were The Isha, the leader of the Naga scouts. This is the same as the Ninja Profession, except that references to the Ninja Ranged Weapons Skill should be replaced with the Kyujutsu Skill.

Mara (NP): During one of your past lives, you were a Mara (Ambassador). This is the same as the Negotiator[1] Profession except that references to Status should be replaced by Caste.

Naar Teban: During one of your past lives, you were a Naar Teban (CoR p.138), a special type of Abomination which is linked to the magic of the Burning Sands. Eventually, your fellow Naga killed you, allowing your soul to rejoin the Akasha and be at peace. Once per day, you may spend an Akasha Point to produce a breath weapon similar to that of the Naar Teban. This breath weapon is shaped as a cone of 10 feet long by 5 feet at the base, that can be dodged with a successful Reflexes roll at a TN of 20, and has a DR of 2k2. This Soulpart cannot be improved with Devotion.

Qamar (NP): During one of your past lives, you were The Qamar, the greatest military leader among the five Bloodlines and a great hero to the Naga. This is the same as the Tactician Profession.

Qarash (NP): During one of your past lives, you were The Qarash, a lieutenant to The Isha and protector of the armies. This is the same as the Officer Profession.

Qatol's Legion (NP): You were one of the original five servants of The Qatol, those who took an oath to forever serve the Qatol no matter what life they may lead. This is the same as the Duty Drive.

Scout[2] **[addendum]:** References to Void Points should be replaced with Akasha Points.

Slayer: During one of your past lives, you were a fearless Slayer, mercilessly bringing death to the enemies of the Naga. This is the same as the Imperial Legionnaire[1] Profession.

Shahadet (NP): During one of your past lives, you were The Shahadet, an honorary title bestowed upon the strongest Asp warrior, ruler of the city of Siska and its Asp inhabitants, and protector of Naga lands. This is the same as the Berserker[3] Profession.

Shashakar (NP): During one of your past lives, you were The Shashakar, the keeper of the greatest secrets of the Cobra. This is the same as the Priest Profession.

Taquar (NP): During one of your past lives, you were The Taquar, defender of the Cobra egg-clutches and stalwart protector of the young whose magic should never be used for destruction or war. This is the same as the Yojimbo Profession.

Teacher: During one of your past lives, you were a great Teacher, expanding the minds of the Naga youth. This is the same as the Sensei Profession.

Warrior: During one of your past lives, you were a great warrior, valiantly serving in the Naga armies and defending your people against all manner of threats. This is the same as the Soldier profession, except that references to Void Points should be replaced with Akasha Points.

Step Four: Devotion

The Naga may increase the mechanical benefits of their Past Lives with Devotion, just as the Rokugani can with their Ancestors. The default Rank is Rank 1, and is free. Higher Ranks must be paid with Character Points. Note that when increasing a Named Personality Past Life's rank, you must choose which of the two Soulpart components benefits from the increase, just like you would choose between Drive and Profession for an Ancestor (this choice must be made for each Devotion rank beyond the first).

Rather than praying at a temple or shrine, the Naga must spend a certain period of time in meditation, immersing himself in the Akasha and contemplating the actions of his Past Lives. The character's Past Life that has the highest Rank (whether it is a Duty of Blood or a Named Personality) determines the amount of time that must be spent in meditation. This base duration is increased by one hour (60 minutes) for each additional Rank the character possesses in any other Past Life.

Example 1: A Naga player has purchased the Warrior Duty of Blood at Rank 3. He has no other Past Lives. This means that he will have a base meditation time of 1 hour per day, as indicated in the table for a Rank 3 Past Life.

Example 2: A Naga player has a Rank 2 Named Personality and a Rank 2 Duty of Blood. He first determines which his highest Rank Past Life is; in this case, it is a tie as they are both at 2. He then determines his base meditation time from the table; in this case, it is 3 hours per week for a Rank 2 Past Life. Finally, he factors in his additional Past Life, in which he has 2 ranks, which adds an additional 2 hours. His final meditation time, therefore, is 5 hours per week.

Kalajel, inspired by Tralan's "Naga Past Lives" thread on the AEG Forums.

Devotion

Rank	Requirement	Cost
1	Must meditate for 1 hour per week	Free for the first one, 2 for each additional Past Lives
2	Must meditate for 3 hours per week	4 for the first one, 6 for each additional Past Lives
3	Must meditate for 1 hour per day	8 for the first one, 10 for each additional Past Lives
4	Must meditate for 3 hours per day	12 for the first one, 14 for each additional Past Lives

Human Ancestor Professions

Berserker: Your ancestor was a fearsome berserker who killed countless enemies on the field of battle. You gain an additional Free Raise while in the Full Attack posture.

Liaison: Your ancestor served as a liaison to one of the non-human species of Rokugan. Choose another non-Tainted race which lives in Ningen-do (Naga, Nezumi, Zokujin, Kenku, etc), you may purchase allies of that race for 2 points less (min. 2 points) and gain a Free Raise on all social interactions with members of that race. If you increase the benefit of this profession with Devotion, only the number of Free Raises gained is augmented.

Sailor: Your ancestor was a sailor who traveled the many waterways of Rokugan. You gain a Free Raise on any Craft: Sailing, Lore: Sailing, and Navigation (Sea) Rolls.

Nezumi Transcendents

Nezumi Transcendants are more akin to Rokugani Ancestors than Naga Past Lives are, but at the same time they are completely different. A Transcendent is a dead Nezumi who manages to keep on existing by the sheer force of its Name (they basically constantly remember themselves so that they will never cease to exist). They live in Yume-do, and every once in a while, a Transcendent will choose to confer his blessings on a Nezumi, usually by contacting him in his dreams. When a Transcendent chooses a mortal aide, it is because he has a goal he wants his aide to accomplish. This can be the source of many problems for the "blessed" Nezumi, as Transcendants exist in Yume-do in a state of timelessness and often forget the limitations of mortals. Once the goal is achieved, the Transcendent departs (along with the bonuses it granted) and the Nezumi receives an amount of Experience Points equal to twice the Transcendant's cost (any cost reductions or free benefits granted by the Transcendent must be paid for with those XP first, before they can be spent on anything else, or they are lost). Any Transcendants beyond the first cost double as it is extremely rare for multiple Transcendants to take interest in the same mortal. A Sodan-Senzo cannot sense the presence of a Transcendent. Transcendants are only available to Nezumi and a Nezumi can never have a Rokugani Ancestor or a Naga Past Life.

In the text below you will find the following notes: [1] in Musha Shugyo #1, [2] in Musha Shugyo #2, [3] in Musha Shugyo #3.

Step One: Concept

A Nezumi Transcendent is built pretty much the same way as a Rokugani Ancestor. Unlike Ancestors, however, a particular Transcendent does not give a variety of bonuses based on some period of its life; each Transcendant always bestows the same bonus on his aide. Nezumi Transcendants have Professions and Drives like human Ancestors, except that to a Nezumi, the term "profession" has a much broader sense. To build a Transcendent, you proceed in the same way you would for a human Ancestor, but you must also pick a goal. In addition, Devotion must be purchased at character creation and cannot be increased later on.

Step Two: Profession

Just like you would for a Rokugani ancestor, you must first pick a Profession. Unlike human professions, the Profession of a Transcendent can be as broad as a niche he occupied, an occupation he had, or anything else that defined who he was and what his role in Nezumi society was.

Profession

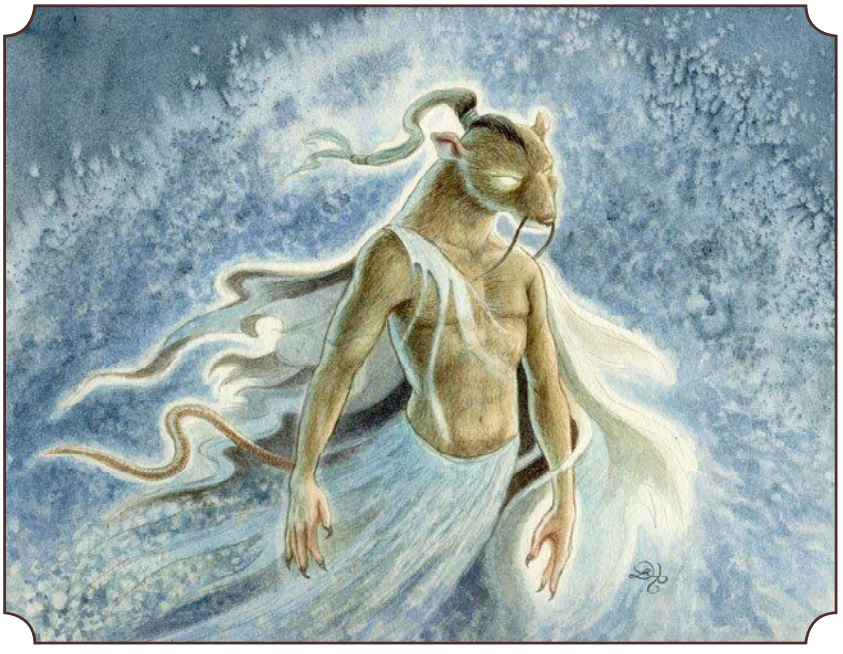
In addition to the professions described below, Nezumi Transcendent can use the following Ancestor Professions: Administrator, Archer[2], Berserker[3], Tactician, and Outcast (except that Horsemanship and Underworld—two skills prohibited to Nezumi—are replaced with Athletics and Investigation).

Blue Fur: Your guardian used to be a prominent member of the Blue Fur tribe. This is identical to the Ninja Profession.

Broken Shinbone: Your guardian was a prominent member of the Broken Shinbone tribe. This is identical to the Hatamoto Profession[1], except that this bonus only applies to rolls made with human targets and you also gain the Human Emphasis to Etiquette for free.

Builder: Your guardian used to be a great builder, who "crafted" many wondrous tools which helped his tribe prosper. Choose 3 Craft Skills, you gain +1k0 with these skills.

Chieftain-General: Your guardian used to be a great chieftain-general who managed to make his tribe prosper. This is identical to the Officer Profession.



Chipped Tooth: Your guardian used to be a prominent member of the Chipped Tooth tribe. This is identical to the Sailor Profession[3].

Crimson Paw: Your guardian used to be a prominent member of the Crimson Paw tribe. This is identical to the Yojimbo Profession.

Crippled Bone: Your guardian used to be a prominent member of the Crippled Bone tribe. This is identical to the Sumotori Profession[2].

Crooked Tail: Your guardian was a prominent member of the Crooked Tail tribe. When attacking a minion of the Shadow Dragon, you gain +1k0 to your Damage Roll. You gain this benefit even if you do not know your opponent is one of the nameless, as he cannot hope to fool your guardian.

Grasping Paw: Your guardian used to be a prominent member of the Grasping Paw tribe. This is identical to the Smuggler Profession[2] except that Underworld is replaced by Sleight of Hand.

Mad Prophet: Your guardian is a mad prophet, plagued with cryptic visions of the past, present, and future. You gain two Free Raises per day to be used on any one skill once per session. However, at the start of every session, your Gamemaster rolls one die, if it comes up even, you get to decide which roll benefits from the Free Raises, if it comes up odd, your Gamemaster decides instead. If the Free Raises are not used by the end of the session, you gain an extra xp at the end of the session instead. Devotion will increase the amount of Free Raises gained (though only one roll is made for all of them), although, at the end of the session, you will gain one extra xp per unused Free Raises.

Peace-Bringer: Your guardian was a peace-bringer; a legendary figure who brought peace to a Nezumi tribe with another race. This is the same as the Liaison Profession[3] but its bonuses applies to non-Nezumi races.

Protector of the Pups: Your guardian was one of the warriors of the tribe who were charged with protecting the pups while the rest of the tribe was away. He gave his life protecting the pups by surmounting what seemed like insurmountable odds, which proved the strength of his Name and ultimately elevated him to the state of Transcendent. When performing the Guard maneuver, you gain a Free Raise which can only be used to increase your charge's TN to be Hit, and you also ignore up to 2 points of TN penalties stemming from Wounds. Devotion affects only your ability to ignore Wound penalties.

Rememberer: Your guardian is a great rememberer who managed to preserve the knowledge of the Nezumi civilization and their past achievements. This is identical to the Scholar Profession.

Scrounger: Your guardian is a resourceful scrounger. Gain 1 rank in the Investigation skill and the Scrounging Emphasis for free. This extra rank is added to any existing ranks, but may not increase your total skill rank above 3.

Shaman: Your guardian is a powerful shaman. You gain a Free Raise on all Name magic you cast. You must be a shaman to take this Profession.

Squeaky Eyeball: Your guardian used to be a prominent member of the Squeaky Eyeball tribe. This is identical to the Ambassador Profession1, except that it affects Name while in another tribe's territory.

Tattered Ear: Your guardian used to be a prominent member of the Tattered Ear tribe. This is identical to the Karo Profession[1].

Third Whisker: Your guardian was a prominent member of the Third Whisker tribe. This is identical to the Seer Profession[2].

Step Three: Drive

Nezumi are extremely passionate creatures that are often driven by the same emotions and needs as mankind.

Drive

Nezumi Transcendent can have the following Drives: Ambition, Compassion, Courage, Courtesy, Curiosity[2], Jealousy[1], Judgment, Passion, Sacrifice, Sincerity, Strife[1], Vanity[1], and Vengeance.

Hoarding: Your guardian managed to hoard items and food from the rest of the tribe and never got caught. You receive your choice of one of the following:
- A Poor Quality peasant weapon, staff, or Nezumi weapon;
- A Poor Quality light or ashigaru armor;
- A Poor Quality set of tools used to help you performing a Craft Skill.

Once you complete your goal and your guardian leaves you, this equipment is suddenly lost, stolen, requisitioned by your tribe, or otherwise breaks down and becomes useless. Every time you increase this Drive with Devotion, you somehow manage to find, scavenge,

steal, or scrounge yet another piece of Poor Quality equipment.

Name: Your guardian was famous for having a particularly strong Name. This is identical to the Honor drive except that it applies to Name, Tests of Name, and Name Rolls.

Trickster: Your guardian was renowned as an incorrigible prankster and had an affinity with other prankster spirits. You gain a mujina companion as if you had successfully cast the Conjure Trickster (CoR p.74) spell. You do not need to offer a gift to the mujina who will stay by your side as long as you benefit from your Transcendent. Once your Transcendent departs, so will your mujina companion, although he could still be bribed into staying. This Drive cannot be increased with Devotion.

Xenophobia: Your guardian is extremely weary of strangers, whether Nezumi or others. You gain a Free Raise on any rolls made to see through lies, deceptions, illusions, and subterfuge.

Step Four: Devotion

When increasing the Devotion of a Nezumi Transcendent, the missions given by a Transcendent to his aide will become more dangerous. The basic devotion rank is Easy, and can be increased in the same way as ancestors. Devotion is still limited to 4 ranks.

Step Five: Goal

This step is where Nezumi Transcendants differ from Ancestors. A Transcendent who chooses a mortal aide has a goal for him to fulfill, a sort of mission that, according to the Transcendent, must be accomplished in order for the Nezumi people to prosper. Goals cannot be increased with Devotion. Because Nezumi Transcendants cost more points than regular ancestors, are temporary in nature, and may very well end up putting the player who took one in more trouble than it's worth, Goals also give a small bonus. Once this goal is fulfilled, the Transcendent departs and the benefits it conferred are lost, but the player gains twice the Transcendant's cost in bonus xp. A player should work out the details of his mission with his Gamemaster: how the goal can be fulfilled, what will be the repercussions (usually, limited to pestering the Nezumi in his sleep) if the Nezumi strays from that goal, how long and difficult it should be for the Nezumi to accomplish this goal, etc.

Name, Tests of Name, and Name Rolls

Just like Rokugani samurai who can draw on their Honor to strengthen their resolve, so too can Nezumi can tap into the strength of their Name to achieve a similar result. This works exactly like Honor Rolls and Tests of Honor from the L5R3E p.192, except that it uses and affects Name instead. Only a Nezumi can attempt Name Rolls and Tests of Name and a Nezumi cannot attempt Honor Rolls and Tests of Honor.
The following table gives a rough estimate of Name Gains and Loses

Action	Name Points Gained or Lost
Killing an enemy	+0 to +1
Running away from a stronger enemy	+1 to +2
Outsmarting an enemy	+1 to +3
Stealing from an enemy	+1 to +3
Making a friend or ally	+2 to +4
Obtaining new food, treasure, weapons, or tools for the tribe	+1 to +2
Inventing, building, or repairing a new tool or weapon	+2 to +5
Making quick, correct decisions on important matters	+0 to +1
Seeking advice	+0 to +1
Fathering pups	+1 to +2
Bearing a litter	+4 to +5
Saving the life of a pup at the risk of your own	+4 to +6
Saving the life of a non-Nezumi child at the risk of your own	+3 to +5
Getting into an unnecessary fight	-0 to -1
Stealing from an ally	-1 to -3
Allowing something to be stolen from the tribe	-2 to -4
Hoarding resources away from the tribe	-3 to -5
Wasting resources	-3 to -5
Abandoning a tribe	-2 to -5
Making an enemy	-1 to -3
Destroying food	-1 to -2
Making a poor decision when advice was available	-0 to -1
Causing the death of any Nezumi, by action or inaction	-3 to -5
Causing the death of any pups, by action or inaction	-5 to -7
Causing the death of any non-Nezumi child, by action or inaction	-4 to -6

Updated from Way of the Ratling p.57

Devotion

Rank	Difficulty	Cost
1	Easy (the goal can easily be plugged in as a side quest to the main adventure and involves very little danger and/or travel)	2
2	Average (the goal can become the focus of a small adventure taking a few sessions and include little travel and/or danger)	5
3	Difficult (the goal can become the focus of a large adventure taking many sessions to accomplish and involve some travel and danger)	8
4	Life Threatening (the goal can become the focus of an entire campaign centered on the Nezumi and involve lots of travel and danger)	11

Goal

Amassing Treasures: Your guardian views the acquisition of new resources as the key to assuring Nezumi survival. This could be done by securing a hunting territory, stealing Rokugani equipment, or scrounging and repairing as much "high quality" tools, weapons, and items as you possibly can in a set period of time. You can add 2 to the total of any Craft (Field Repair, Repair) and Investigation (Scrounging) rolls you make.

Destruction of a Foe: Your guardian is obsessed with the destruction of a particular foe (whether minions of the Shadow Dragon, Tainted Creatures, Naga, or something else). He may require that you simply "kill more creatures" or may designate a specific target. Willing association or fraternization with such foes will result in the loss of your guardian or maybe even being targeted by another one of his mortal aide. You may add your Name Rank to your damage rolls total when fighting that particular kind of enemy.

Magical Power: Your guardian is obsessed with accumulating new forms of magical power and unlocking their secrets. He can take a particular interest in a particular form of magic (Akasha magic, maho magic, Meishodo, void magic, etc.) or can simply demand to search for dangerous rituals and artifacts. Any hostile non-Name magic spells cast on you have their TN increased by your Name.

Past Glory: Your guardian's goal is to elevate the Nezumi people to their past glory. This could be accomplished by reuniting The One Tribe, reclaiming lost Nezumi cities, or recovering lost Nezumi technology. Your Niche is considered to be 2 points higher.

Peacekeeper: Your guardian is obsessed with keeping the peace between multiple parties, whether between two Nezumi tribes or even between the whole Nezumi race and some other species. You roll +1k0 on any Etiquette rolls you make to preserve peace or avoid hostilities.

Protector: Your guardian views the protection of your tribe as being of the utmost importance. This may be because he believes your tribe will play an important role in the future of the Nezumi race or for some other nebulous reason. He may require that you destroy immediate threats to your tribe or that you secure foodstuff and equipment or maybe even save and protect any tribe members who are in peril. Every time you act for the direct betterment of you tribe, you add +3 to the total of any appropriate skill rolls.

Kalajel

The Passion Drive

The abilities granted by the Passion Drive should only be used on members of the same species, or at the very least, on people who think you are of the same species. For example, a Nezumi who has a Transcendent with the Passion Drive would only be able to use it on Nezumi of the opposite gender. However, a female Chameleon with the Passion Duty (Drive) and passing herself off as a Rokugani could use it on male Rokugani.

Ningyo as a Player Character

Under normal circumstances, a sea-dwelling and water breathing Ningyo would not be suitable for playing as a PC. However, there are some extremely rare instances of Ningyo who can take a human form. Tsamaru, Shiba-Kami's wife, was one of them. These Ningyo shapeshifters, called Joningyo by the rest of their race, number less than a hundred. They are the only viable option to play a Ningyo PC. You will find here the information and rules to play such a character.

Fitting in Rokugan

Ningyo shapeshifters are able to go where no other Ningyo can without some sort of magical help. They can explore the dry lands of Rokugan, and this freedom hones their sense of curiosity well beyond what is the standard among Ningyo. It is thus not surprising that most Joningyo would be found mingling among humans.

As a peasant: this is the easiest way in. Peasants rarely travel, and never very far. But a Joningyo could show up in a village, explaining how his original village was destroyed by some calamity (natural or man-made) and how he wishes to rebuild a new life here. After some time where the newcomer acts as normally as is expected from a peasant, the local population is likely to accept him and not think twice about him anymore. However, the Joningyo would still be subject to the constraints that rule his status, and thus, unless the character is played as the servant of a samurai PC, it will be difficult to integrate such a character in a campaign. As a result, Musha Shugyo does not offer rules to play a Joningyo passing as a peasant.

As a samurai: A Joningyo could procure himself a daisho, the symbol of the samurai's status, and pose as a wandering ronin. From there, life options are the same as for any ronin: he could remain a free and masterless warrior, with all the hardships that come with such a lifestyle, or he could seek acceptance in a ronin organization, or even try to ingratiate himself with a samurai lord and be adopted into a clan. This is a risky path: should his true nature be revealed, his life would certainly be forfeit as a swift death is the punishment for impersonating a samurai. Given the demanding lifestyle of a Joningyo (they need to regularly rest in Ningyo form), and the relative ease with which their nature can be discovered (water on their skin reveals their true form), the risks are high indeed. Only advantage: even though he is at the bottom of the samurai social scale, he still is considered samurai by humans.

No subterfuge: A Joningyo who would wander the Empire without hiding his true nature would be faced with very difficult challenges whenever he would have to interact with humans, samurai in particular, and especially magistrates. Weary of shapeshifters, most samurai would not be able to distinguish between a threat from the Shadowlands and an innocuous traveling creature. The inability to present travel papers would further hinder the Joningyo's movements. However, a Joningyo could present himself to a samurai lord and offer his fealty. The lord's reaction would be contingent on his clan.

The Mantis clan is obviously the clan that would be the most accepting of the Joningyo, and would immediately recognize the benefits such a creature could bring them. Several non-shapeshifting Ningyo have already been accepted among the Mantis, and some are still working along kobune crews. With the integration of the Kitsune (formerly the Fox Clan) as a family of the Mantis Clan, the clan is more open than ever to the shapeshifters.

A few other clans would look favorably upon accepting a Joningyo: the Phoenix, the Unicorn and the Dragon. The Phoenix, despite their usually traditional outlook on customs and bushido, remember that Shiba-Kami's wife was a Joningyo, and thus are very respectful towards them. The Unicorn is a clan that has always been open-minded towards outsiders and some lords, especially the higher ranking ones who might have some understanding of the origins of Mizu Mura's wealth, would certainly be willing to welcome a Joningyo. Finally, the Dragon has built a good relationship with the Ningyo, thanks to Kitsuki Tadashi, and it is likely that Dragon sponsorships of some Joningyo were part of the various deals made between the Dragon Clan and the Ningyo. Both the Unicorn and the Dragon tend to look favorably upon the Ningyo due to their close association with the Naga.

For the other clans, which have a more neutral approach, the chances of being accepted would depend on the circumstances under which the Joningyo would present himself. The Crab, usually open to working alongside Nonhumans such as the Nezumi or Naga, would probably accept a Joningyo in principle, though they are just as likely to consider it too frail to be of any help with the Crab duties. The Lion and Crane, in general, would not want anything to do with creatures that they view as inferior. The Kitsu family of the Lion, however, could be interested in learning more about their ancestors through the witness accounts that a Ningyo could offer, and thus could extend their protection to the Joningyo and welcome him. Similarly, a Kenku-trained Crane could be more sympathetic to a Joningyo. The Scorpion and Crane are likely to think that a Joningyo, untrained in the Rokugani social customs, has little value to their operations and plans. So, odds are not very good for him there, although a cunning Scorpion samurai could certainly understand the advantages coming with a shapeshifting, water breathing creature...

If the Lion, Scorpion and Crane would not be particularly well disposed towards Joningyo, the Imperial families are outright hostile to the idea of granting a creature

privileges reserved to the samurai. No Joningyo would ever be accepted among them as anything but a lowly servant, worth even less than an eta.

The Spider Clan is not interested in the Ningyo, and even less in the Joningyo. Their close ties with the Naga, the staunch enemy of the Foul that the Spider embrace, and the fact that most Ningyo are immune to the Taint make them undesirable among the Spider. In fact, a Spider follower would certainly try and kill a Joningyo on sight if there is no risk of blowing his cover, just like he would with a Naga. In any case, no Ningyo would ever wish to associate with the Tainted.

Finally, the Joningyo could use his people's long friendship with the Naga to be introduced to the Emerald Empire. Such individuals would be considered by the samurai, for all intent and purpose, as Naga vassals. While the Naga were awake and active in the Empire's affairs, an endorsement by the snake people had much more weight, but even after their return to the Great Sleep, the Joningyo to which the Naga have given their support still enjoy their benefactors' good reputation, especially among the Dragon and Unicorn.

Whether the Joningyo impersonated a samurai, or gained the protection of one, he will obtain some benefits of this status. As a sworn servant of a clan, he will gain access to travel papers and the support of his clan of adoption as any other samurai. Only those two options are adequate for a Ningyo PC, and the rules provided here cover only them.

Roleplaying a Ningyo Shapeshifter

The Joningyo walks a fine line: on one hand he must keep the secrets of his people with his life, appearing less intelligent than he really is, but on the other hand, he is supposed to serve his samurai lord to the best of his abilities and demonstrate that he is worthy of his sensei and lord's trust. As a result, the Joningyo will usually present himself as an aberration of his race, a freak genius that has very little contact with the rest of his people, because they rejected him. To protect his race, he would not hesitate to frequently point out how stupid and backward they are.

The Joningyo, like the rest of their race, do not age. It is advised that a Joningyo character be one of the rare few Ningyo born in recent times, to help explain the character's low Rings and Insight at creation, and facilitate roleplaying. However, nothing forbids a player to face the challenge that comes with roleplaying an older Ningyo (though one that would have only recently decided to truly experience the world), more confident, maybe a bit arrogant and know-it-all in a bookish way, fully aware that he has all the time in the world and who frowns upon impetuosity.

Aside from this, the Joningyo tries to fit in human society as much as he can. His samurai sponsor, if he has one, knows about his Ningyo nature, and a few other trustworthy persons might as well, but it is not an obligation for the Joningyo to advertise his difference. Usually in this case, unless directly asked, the Joningyo will avoid discussing the topic. Of course, if he is impersonating a samurai ronin, then revealing his secret is tantamount to suicide.

Even though the Joningyo can travel on dry lands and remain out of water for long periods, he still dislikes moving away from large bodies of water such as the sea, lakes or rivers. When traveling with no such natural features in sight, the Joningyo will always seem more worried than usual. Needless to say, traveling to the Burning Sands is out of question without magical support, and even with it, the Joningyo will be extremely reluctant to go. When the Joningyo needs to revert to his Ningyo form for a few hours every day, he prefers to do so in a natural body of water, the larger the better. However, a small pool such as a natural spring or even a large tub filled with water would be sufficient in a pinch, though not comfortable.

While in human form, a Joningyo can eat rice and vegetable in small quantities to keep up appearances, but they make him fell slightly sick, and they offer no nutritive value. The true diet of a Joningyo usually consists of raw meat, preferably from fish and seafood, though other kind of animal meats can be consumed, even if the taste is not very pleasant to the Ningyo (they occasionally eat seals or marine birds, for instance).

Creating a Joningyo Character

To create a Ningyo Shapeshifter PC, follow the standard character creation process, with the following modifications. Joningyo do not gain Family and School Trait bonuses. Instead, their starting Water Ring is rank 3. Their choice of starting Clan and School is limited by the selection available through the Ningyo-specific Story Advantage they must buy (see below).

Permanent Abilities

Shapeshifter: All Joningyo characters have two forms: their natural Ningyo form and one static human form into which they may transform. This human form is set at character creation and may not change. Joningyo may change shape once per day at will as a Complex Action. Subsequent attempts to change shape require a Raw Water Roll against a TN of 5. This TN is increased by +10 for every time the Joningyo has changed shape since sunrise. When the Joningyo changes from one form to another, all equipment and clothes he was wearing remain on his body, if it is physically possible. However, anything worn below the waist must be removed beforehand if it is not compatible with the new form (typically, this would be sandals or boots, loincloth, hakama pants, armor covering the legs, etc., but skirts, robes and long kimono would cause no problem). If incompatible clothes are worn during the transformation, they are ruined, and the Joningyo suffers 1k1 wounds (possibly more if rigid pieces of armor were worn, at the Gamemaster's discretion). Unlike regular shapeshifter spirits, the Joningyo's Rings, Traits, Skills, etc. remain identical in both human and Ningyo form.

Water Breathing: Joningyo can breathe normally in water, regardless of their current form.

Immunity to the Taint: Joningyo born in the hidden Ningyo civilization receive the benefit of the pearl rituals their race learned from their Naga allies, and are immune to the Taint. They may never gain Shadowlands Points or a level of the Taint under any circumstances, and may not utilize any abilities that would normally confer the Taint (such as casting Maho spells). Of course, Sundered Joningyo do not receive this benefit (See the Sundered Disadvantage).

Limited Telepathy: Like any other Ningyo, while underwater, the Joningyo can communicate telepathically over a short range with other Ningyo, Naga, and Orochi. They can also use their touch telepathy ability with other Ningyo (which functions equally well in and out of water).

Immortality: After a certain age (around 60 years), Joningyo effectively cease to grow older. Even though they can not die of old age, any other form of harm can kill them. Diseases, poisons, wounds, suffocation, starvation, dehydration, etc. can all prove fatal.

Friend of the Water Kami (non-shugenja only): Non-shugenja Joningyo have access to the same spellcasting abilities as the rest of their race, with the same limitations (notably: they only have access to Water spells ML 3 or lower, and they can only cast these spells while underwater). These Joningyo start the game with 1 free ML1 Water spell pearl, and can buy more at the cost of 3 CP per extra spell pearls (maximum 4 spells known at character creation). Upon reaching Insight Rank 2, a non-shugenja Joningyo is allowed to buy more spell pearls during the game, at the cost of 5x the ML of the purchased spell in Experience point, but no more than 2 spell pearls per Insight Rank beyond the first (even a spell pearl given to the character will not be usable until the Experience Point cost is paid). They have a number of Water spell slots equal to their Water Ring plus their Insight Rank. Just like regular shugenja usually need to visit their dojo to obtain new spell scrolls, they must have access to a Naga jakla or Ningyo shoqan to be able to gain new spell pearls.

Abilities while in Ningyo form only

Aquatic: Joningyo may swim at their normal movement rate without a skill roll. If they attempt a maneuver more complex than simple movement, they gain a +2k2 bonus on all their Athletics (Swimming) rolls. They are nearly invisible in water and gain a +2k2 bonus on all their Stealth rolls to avoid detection in water, as well as a +10 bonus to their TN to be Hit. Usually, Joningyo wear no clothes or armor while in Ningyo form, as those tend to weight them down and hinder their movement. If for any reason a Joningyo keeps his clothes on while in Ningyo form, he loses these bonuses.

Dark Vision: Joningyo can see perfectly in absolute darkness. They never suffer any Perception or attack penalties as a result of darkness or blind-fighting.

Poison: The Joningyo's bite carries a poison that it uses to disorient prey when hunting. Biting an opponent is an Agility/Jiujutsu (Bite) melee Attack Roll with the Bite Maneuver (this maneuver requires 2 Raises, unless the

victim is already successfully grappled by the Joningyo, in which case the Bite Attack is automatically successful and replaces the normal grappling damage). The bitten opponent must make a successful Raw Earth Roll against a TN of 15, or lose 1 Rank of Intelligence for a period of 1 day. If the opponent is reduced to 0 Intelligence, it falls asleep until the poison wears off.

Limitations

Limited Shapeshifting: Ningyo shapeshifters do not have to follow taboos like other true shapeshifters native of Chikushudo, but they are unable to remain in human form indefinitely. Everyday, they must spend at least 4 hours in their natural form, fully immersed in water. Every day that the shapeshifter has not been able to do so, his highest Ring and related Traits are temporarily reduced by 1 (in case of a tie between Rings, the Ningyo chooses which one is affected). Reductions are cumulative, but Rings and Traits may not be reduced to less than 1. If all his Rings are reduced to 1 by this effect, the shapeshifter immediately reverts to his Ningyo form. His Rings are no further reduced but he will suffocate without some sort of magical help. If the Ningyo shapeshifter returns into water, he must rest there (in Ningyo form) for a number of hours equal to twice the number of days he stayed out of water, after which he recovers his Rings' lost Ranks at the rate of 1 Rank per 2 hours (all Rings recover simultaneously). Note that if the Joningyo reverts to his Ningyo form but can not rest in water for any reason, even the use of a spell such as Gift of Mizu-no-Kami will not satisfy his racial requirements and he will have to reduce one of his Rings. Similarly, resting in water while in human form does not fulfill the conditions of this limitation.

Void Deficiency: Joningyo may not use Void Points, although their Void Ring counts toward their Insight and may limit the maximum number of Raises they may make on any given roll. Joningyo shugenja do get a number of "universal" spell slots equal to their Void Ring, as normal, even though they can not cast Void spells under any circumstances.

Magical Limitations: Joningyo may not learn Kiho or receive magical tattoos.

Peculiar Diet: Joningyo must eat raw animal meat to sustain themselves (preferably fish and seafood). Any other food (including cooked meat) may be consumed, but it will not fulfill the Joningyo's dietary requirements, leaving him hungry, and may even prove detrimental to his health. As a rule of thumb, one pound of meat per day is the bare minimum a Joningyo needs to feed properly.

Mandatory Story Advantage: Joningyo must select and buy the Ningyo-specific Story Advantage that best fits the characters' story (see these new Advantages below) and allows them to receive the benefits of being associated to the samurai.

Other Advantages and Disadvantages: The Joningyo may not select any of the following Advantages: Blackmail, Different School, Hotei's Blessing, Imperial Spouse, Inheritance, Ishiken-do, Servant, Social Position, and Wealthy. The Joningyo may not select any of the following Disadvantages: Bitter Betrothal, Black Sheep, Cast Out, Deathseeker, Dependent, Epilepsy, Forced Retirement, Forsaken, Haunted, Hostage, Momoku, Shadowlands Taint (except his you have the Sundered Disadvantage as well), Social Disadvantage, and True Love.

The following Advantages have their cost modified for Joningyo: Large (1 point more), Sacred Weapon (Ningyo spear, 2k2 Pearl Nage-yari that can be thrown with no range penalty while underwater, 5 points), Sage (1 point less), Wary (1 point less), Way of the Land (1 point more if selecting any area other than a waterway, lake or part of the sea).

The following Disadvantages have their CP bonus modified for Joningyo: Ascetic (1 point more), Brash (1 point less), Compulsion (Gold or Pearl, 1 point more), Gaijin Name (in fact, Ningyo Name, 1 point more), Greedy (1 point more), Small (1 point more).

Story Advantages

The Ningyo have schools of their own, but their techniques are specifically designed for the underwater environment and their unique physiology. For this reason, they are of very limited use to Ningyo shapeshifters, and thus Musha Shugyo does not provide rules for them.

Instead, the Ningyo shapeshifter PC must buy a specific Advantage that is, at its core, a fusion of the Different School and Ally Advantages. These Advantages are designed to offer mechanics facilitating the introduction of a Ningyo shapeshifter in a campaign. However, we are aware that they are somewhat artificial in assuming a clan would accept to share its secrets with a Nonhuman ally. If the Gamemaster feels the benefits of the Advantages are too high for their cost, he can require the player to also buy ranks in the appropriate Ally Advantage or take the Obligation Disadvantage for no CP. As usual, the Gamemaster has the final word regarding how to integrate Ningyo PC in his campaign.

Ningyo Shapeshifter, Ronin Impersonator [Inherent, 5 points]

You found or stole a daisho, and you pass yourself off as a masterless samurai. You begin the game with a ronin school of your choice at Rank 1. You have no Status (as per the normal ronin rules) and your starting Glory is 0. You gain the Dark Secret (Samurai Impersonator) worth 10 points, that does not count toward your maximum number of Disadvantage points, but for which you receive no bonus CP. As long as your secret is safe, you are considered a member of the samurai caste, with all the social benefits a ronin normally has from such a status (limited as they are).

Ningyo Shapeshifter, Friend of the Clan [Inherent, 10 points]

You have found some degree of acceptance for who you are among the samurai of a clan. You begin the game at Rank 1 in a school from the chosen clan (you may not choose a Spider Clan/Shadowlands or Imperial school). You are technically not a member of the samurai caste, but you benefit from the protection of your samurai

sponsor(s). In return, you are expected to behave as a samurai, follow orders and in general be loyal to your clan of adoption. This Advantage costs 2 points less for Mantis Schools, or 1 point less for Dragon, Phoenix and Unicorn Schools. Your starting Status and Glory are 1.

Ningyo Shapeshifter, Ally of the Naga [Inherent, -1 point]

This Advantage must be selected at the same time you buy the Ningyo Shapeshifter, Friend of the Clan Advantage, and only if the selected clan is Unicorn, Dragon, or Crab. You have used your connections among the Naga to be formally introduced to the Empire. Your Naga allies have arranged for you to join a human school of one of the Great Clans with which they have good relations. You begin the game at Rank 1 in a school from the chosen clan. Alternatively, you may begin the game at Rank 1 in a Naga school (although you are still officially associated to the chosen clan). You are considered to be a Naga vassal. You are not a member of the samurai caste, but you benefit from the limited protection your Naga allies can offer through their influence among humans. In return, you are expected to behave as a samurai (or at least, as honorably as a Naga), follow orders and in general be loyal to your clan of adoption and the Naga. Your starting Status and Glory are 0.5.

More Joningyo Advantages and Disadvantages

There are a few Spirit Powers that Joningyo can purchase as Advantages. They must pay the Spirit Point cost with CP or XP and meet the Insight Rank required by the power's Mastery Level. The powers are: **Ghost Tongue**, **Hunter's Bane**, **Shapeshift: Age**, **Unnatural Speed**, **Spirit Vision**, **Animal Tongue**, **Spirit Sense**, **Kami Tongue**, **Humanity**, **Spirit Brother** (costs 4 XP, but does not protect against Fire spells), **Spirit Walk**.

Advantages

Adopted by the Sun [7 points]

You can retain your human form longer than normal. When you are not able to revert to your Ningyo form and rest in water, the reduction of one your Rings occurs every two days instead of every day. You may not take the Delicate Scales Disadvantage if you have this Advantage. Ningyo Shapeshifter only.

Human Skin [Inherent, 4 points]

Your true Ningyo skin is not immediately revealed when it is exposed to water while in human form. Only after a minute of exposition will the green scaly skin be revealed, usually leaving you enough time to dry your skin before it ever happens. Ningyo Shapeshifter only.

Touch of the Mind [6 points]

You have learned to use some of your telepathic abilities with races other than the Ningyo. You can mentally talk to anyone with whom you are in direct physical contact, even if it is as little as a fingertip on someone's wrist. Communication is one-way only, the person who you are talking to cannot reply via this link, unless you both have the Kharmic Tie Advantage with each other. Ningyo Shapeshifter only.

Disadvantages

Abandoned by the Water Kami [Inherent, 3 points]

You were born without the Ningyo's natural ability to call upon the water kami's favor. You can not cast spells. Other Ningyo, if aware of your situation, will consider you cursed and will shun you (TN +10 to all Social Rolls with such Ningyo). This Disadvantage is worth 1 point more if your starting school is a Bushi school. Non-shugenja Ningyo Shapeshifter only.

Delicate Scales [Inherent, 4 points]

Instead of 4 hours per day, you need to revert to your Ningyo form and rest in water for at least 8 hours per day. You may not take the Adopted by the Sun Advantage if you have this Disadvantage. Ningyo Shapeshifter only.

Strict Dietary Requirement [2 points]

You are completely unable to digest anything else than your normal Ningyo diet (raw fish and seafood meat). Every time you eat something else, you suffer a +5 penalty to the TN of all your rolls for a duration of 4 hours as you are distracted by dizziness and stomach cramps. Should you eat forbidden food again before the end of the 4 hours, the penalties are cumulative. Ningyo Shapeshifter only.

Sundered [Inherent, 8 points]

You were born among the Sundered and suffer from their mental afflictions. Although you are one of the brightest among the Sundered, your blunt mind has difficulty grasping the subtler aspects of society's unspoken rules. You may not enter any Courtier School. Whenever you wish to increase your Awareness or Intelligence, you must spend 4 extra Experience Points (including during character creation). You never underwent the pearl rituals learned from the Naga and thus you may gain Shadowlands Taint normally. Ningyo Shapeshifter only.

Water Mute [Inherent, 1 point]

You were born without the Ningyo's natural ability to communicate telepathically with other Ningyo, Naga or Orochi while underwater. You can not use either the short range telepathy or the touch telepathy abilities, and you are reduced to using signs or writing notes to communicate while underwater. Ningyo Shapeshifter only.

Mike Brodu

Shapeshifters in your Game

There are few sets of rules that have raised as many questions as the Shapeshifter rules presented in *Creatures of Rokugan* Third Edition. This article is an attempt to provide as many answers as possible to these questions, and offer a few new options in the process for Shapeshifter characters.

Animal Form

When in animal form, the Shapeshifter's stats are modified to reflect his unique characteristics in this shape. Here is a detailed overview of those changes and how to calculate them.

Physical Traits

When in animal form, all the Shapeshifter's physical traits (Agility, Reflexes, Stamina, and Strength) become those of the natural animal of the same species, plus one third of the Shapeshifter's human form corresponding Trait Rank, rounded down. For instance, the Kitsune's fox form has a base Strength 1, but if the human form has Strength 4, then the animal form gains 1 Rank for a total of Strength 2. Note that Improved Animal Form allows the Shapeshifter to add half of his human form Trait rather than a third (so in the above example the animal form would gain 2 Ranks for a total of Strength 3).

Mental Traits

When in animal form, all the Shapeshifter's mental Traits (Intelligence, Awareness, Willpower, and Perception) remain the same as those of the human form. Ignore the animal's mental Traits.

Rolls When Attacking

When attacking in animal form, the character uses the animal's regular means of attacking, usually with claws and fangs. Whenever this happens, the Shapeshifter should use a modified Rolls When Attacking value. Deconstruct the given value for the normal animal to determine which part is variable (based on Agility) and which is fixed. For instance, the standard fox rolls 2k2 when attacking, with an Agility of 1. This means the Rolls When Attacking value is (Agility+1)k(Agility+1). Then, use the animal form's Agility (which might have been increased if the human form's Agility is high enough) to calculate the Shapeshifter's base Attack roll when in animal form. The table below offers the formulas for Rolls When Attacking, Rolls For Damage, and TN to Be Hit for all the animal forms currently open to Shapeshifters.

Rolls For Damage

Proceed with the same logic to deconstruct the normal animal's Rolls For Damage value and determine what is the base DR and what is the variable dice bonus based on its Strength. For instance, the standard fox rolls 2k1 for damage with a Strength of 1. This means the base DR is (Strength+1)k1. Then, use the animal form's Strength (which might have been increased if the human form's Strength is 3 or higher) to calculate the Shapeshifter's base Damage roll when in animal form.

TN to Be Hit

Again, determine which part is based on Reflexes and which is a species static bonus (some animals are very small and difficult to hit, others are just tough, have a thick hide, or are very nimble). For instance, the standard badger has a TNtBH of 15 and Reflexes 2. This means its TNtBH is calculated as (Reflexes X5)+5. Then, use the animal form's Reflexes (which might have been increased if the human form's Reflexes is high enough) to calculate the Shapeshifter's base TNtBH when in animal form. Note that unless the Shapeshifter is equipped with tailor made barding, he does not have any TNtBH bonus from armor.

Wounds Per Wound Level

For simplicity's sake, it is recommended that the Shapeshifter's Wounds per level remain identical in both forms. It would be possible to determine the Wound

	Rolls When Attacking	Rolls For Damage	TN to Be Hit
Bat	(AGI+1)k(AGI)	(STR)k1	(REFx5)+10
Badger	(AGI+1)k(AGI)	(STR+1)k2	(REFx5)+5
Bear	(AGI)k(AGI–1)	(STR+1)k2	(REFx5)+10
Cat	(AGI+1)k(AGI)	(STR+2)k1	(REFx5)+5
Crane	(AGI+1)k(AGI)	(STR)k1	(REFx5)+5
Crow	(AGI+2)k(AGI)	(STR+2)k2	(REFx5)+15
Dog	(AGI)k(AGI)	(STR+1)k2	(REFx5)+5
Fox	(AGI+1)k(AGI+1)	(STR+1)k1	(REFx5)
Hare	(AGI)k(AGI)	(STR+1)k1	(REFx5)
Minor Dragon	(AGI+2)k(AGI)	(STR+2)k2	(REFx5)
Monkey	(AGI)k(AGI)	(STR+2)k2	(REFx5)+5
Phoenix	(AGI+2)k(AGI)	(STR+2)k2	(REFx5)+15
Tiger	(AGI+1)k(AGI)	(STR+1)k3	(REFx5)
Wolf	(AGI)k(AGI–1)	(STR+2)k2	(REFx5)

racial bonus per level, but recalculating this value leads to some absurd results. For instance, the fox has 5 Wounds per level with an Earth Ring of 1, which would suggest a Wound racial bonus of +3 (Earth x2 +3 = 5). Imagine a well built Kitsune character with Earth 3 in human form and thus 6 Wounds per level (except Out). When in the form of a fox, a much smaller creature, his Wounds per level would actually increase to 7, which is silly of course. It is also a problem if a wounded character shapeshifts: how would the lost Wounds be transferred? Proportionally or whole piece? For all these reasons, just calculate the character's Wounds based on his human form's Earth Ring at all times.

Other Abilities

Almost all animals on which the animal forms are based possess some abilities. Behavioral traits, such as "always flees when attacked" or the bear's frenzy when wounded, are overridden by the character's intelligence, and he always has the choice whether to follow his instincts or not. However, the more physical traits, such as the loss of the ability to fly when injured beyond a certain point, the ability to see perfectly in darkness, or a bonus to Initiative, cannot be ignored and remain true even for Shapeshifters in animal form.

New Shapeshifter Species

The vast expanses of the Spirit Realms are populated by an infinity of Shapeshifter species. Virtually every mundane animal, as well as some creatures that exist only in legends, possesses a Shapeshifter counterpart. Here are a few more of them to increase variety in your games if the Gamemaster approves their addition.

Karasu (Crow)

Karasu are enigmatic characters, rarely speaking, and when they do it is often in riddles. They like to collect secrets and unveil mysteries, and are always eager to learn more. Karasu do not do so with the intent to use the secret as leverage (they do not even judge the secret's morality), but rather because they treasure rare knowledge. One secret in particular seems to interest them to the point of obsession: enlightenment. Karasu can often be found among monastic communities (Brotherhood or Dragon), trying to understand this greatest mystery of all. While some less educated observers might mistake a Karasu for a Kenku, the Kenku are much more mischievous than the quiet Karasu, who could be said to lack a sense of humor.

Home Realm: Chikushudo
Spirit Points: 3
Benefit: +1 Void
• **Mystical:** You may purchase Kiho (except Void Kiho) as if you were a monk. You may spend your Void Points to activate your Kiho. You gain one Kiho at character creation (normal rules about Mastery Level apply). Your Ranks in the Shapeshifter School count as Ranks in a Monk school, although you do not get a new kiho for free by advancing in Rank. You may use any combination of Spirit Points with either Character Points or Experience Points to purchase additional kiho, following the normal restrictions.
• **Natural Form:** Your natural form is which of a large crow with shiny black feathers. Use the stats of the raptor (3E, p.279; 3ER, p.295) for the Karasu's base animal form.

Kuma (Bear)

Usually placid and content to live their lives undisturbed, their wrath can be terrible if something provokes their ire. It is rare to see a Kuma among humans, and when it happens, it is often because he is on a quest of vengeance or justice. Kuma are loyal friends and utterly devoted to their family, but they are also unrelenting foes against those who wronged them, especially if they were Tainted. The Kuma who suffered at the hands of a creature from the Shadowlands can often be found among the warriors of the Crab Clan, with whom they share the same hatred of the Taint.

Home Realm: Chikushudo
Spirit Points: 2
Benefit: +1 Strength
• **Resilient:** Your have one additional Wound per Wound Level.
• **Spirit Powers:** You may buy Extraordinary Healing for 3 points instead of 4.
• **Frenzy:** While you are in human form, if you have lost at least 2 Wound Ranks or more during a single skirmish, you may enter a frenzied state that gives you a +1k1 bonus on all Attack and Damage rolls, but your TN to Be Hit is reduced by 10. This frenzy lasts until the end of the skirmish. It may be stopped with a successful Willpower Roll against a TN equal to the current total amount of lost Wounds, and if it is stopped this way, the Kuma may not reenter his frenzied state again for 1 hour.
• **Natural Form:** Your natural form is which of an imposing black bear. Use the stats of the bear (3E, p.278; 3ER, p.294) for the Kuma's base animal form.

Ookami (Wolf)

It is not easy to gain the trust of an Ookami Shapeshifter, but once it is done they are as loyal as the Inu. More than any other Shapeshifter, the Ookami prefer to live in the wilderness rather than civilization. As a result, when they decide to live among humans, they often choose small settlements. They share their love of freedom with the samurai of the Unicorn and Mantis Clans, and the Ookami's strong resolve when facing adversity, however difficult it might prove to be, also makes them kindred spirits with Minor Clan samurai and ronin.

Home Realm: Chikushudo
Spirit Points: 2
Benefit: +1 Perception
• **Deadly Howl:** Ookami Shapeshifters gain this Spirit Power for free.
• **Enhanced Senses:** You gain a +10 bonus to any Hunting Skill roll if tracking by smell, or +20 instead if you are in your natural form.
• **Spirit Powers:** You may buy Pack Soul for 3 points instead of 5.
• **Free Spirit:** When required to take Taboos, Ookami take 1 fewer Point than normal.
• **Natural Form:** Your natural form is which of a large gray wolf. Use the stats of the wolf (3E, p.279; 3ER, p.296) for the Ookami's base animal form.

Here are the stats for the various mundane animals that are currently missing from Third Edition. Use these to determine your Shapeshifter's stats while in animal form.

Bat, Large (Koumori)

Air: 1	Earth: 1	Fire: 1	Water: 1
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 2	Perception: 5

Rolls When Attacking: 3k2 **Rolls For Damage:** 1k1
TN to Be Hit: 30 **Wounds Per Wound Level:** 3

Special: A bat can see perfectly in absolute darkness; it never suffers any Perception or attack penalties as a result of darkness or blind-fighting. Always flees when attacked. After losing three Wound Ranks, the bat can no longer fly and its TN to Be Hit becomes 5.

Badger (Tanuki)

(See stats for badgers in 3E, p.278; 3ER p.294)

Cat, Large (Bakeneko)

Air: 2	Earth: 1	Fire: 2	Water: 1
Reflexes: 4			Perception: 4

Rolls When Attacking: 3k2 **Rolls For Damage:** 3k1
TN to Be Hit: 25 **Wounds Per Wound Level:** 4

Special: A cat gains +1k1 on Initiative rolls. Always flees when attacked. Natural cats and Bakeneko (only while in animal form, and only if they do not already possess these skills) are considered to have 3 Ranks in the Stealth and Hunting Skills. Cats use their Reflexes to determine movement rather than their Water Ring.

Crane (Tsuru)

Air: 2	Earth: 2	Fire: 2	Water: 2
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 3	

Rolls When Attacking: 4k3 **Rolls For Damage:** 2k1
TN to Be Hit: 25 **Wounds Per Wound Level:** 4

Special: After losing three Wound Ranks, the crane can no longer fly and its TN to Be Hit becomes 5.

Dog (Inu)

(See stats for dogs in 3E, p.278; 3ER p.294)

Fox (Kitsune)

(See stats for foxes in 3E, p.279; 3ER p.295)

Hare (Usagi)

Air: 2	Earth: 1	Fire: 1	Water: 1
Reflexes: 5		Agility: 2	Perception: 4

Rolls When Attacking: 2k2 **Rolls For Damage:** 2k1
TN to Be Hit: 25 **Wounds Per Wound Level:** 4

Special: A hare gains +1k1 on Initiative rolls. Always flees when attacked. Hares use their Reflexes to determine movement rather than their Water Ring.

Minor Dragon (Ryu)

Air: 2	Earth: 2	Fire: 2	Water: 2
Reflexes: 3		Agility: 3	

Rolls When Attacking: 5k3 **Rolls For Damage:** 4k2
TN to Be Hit: 15 **Wounds Per Wound Level:** 5

Special: The minor dragon gains +2k2 for all Grappling attack and damage rolls. Minor dragons can fly even though they do not possess wings; it is an innate magical ability. Note that the Ryu is native of Tengoku, thus the stats offered here are only relevant to Ryu Shapeshifters; there are no mundane minor dragons to be found in Rokugan.

Monkey (Saru)

Air: 1	Earth: 2	Fire: 2	Water: 2
Reflexes: 3		Agility: 4	

Rolls When Attacking: 4k4 **Rolls For Damage:** 4k2
TN to Be Hit: 20 **Wounds Per Wound Level:** 4

Special: Natural monkeys and Saru (only while in animal form, and only if they do not already possess these skills) are considered to have 1 Rank in the Athletics, Ninja Ranged Weapons (Tsubute only), and Sleight of Hand (Escape) Skills.

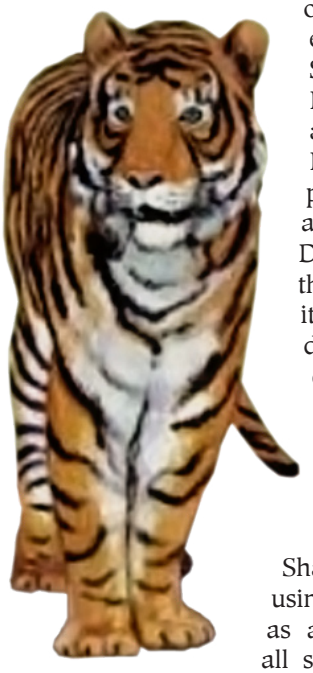
Phoenix (Fushicho)

(See stats for raptors in 3E, p.279; 3ER p.295)

Special: Phoenixes possess a bright aura that can be changed at will into a fiery aura that sets aflame anything flammable it touches; it is an innate magical ability. Note that the Fushicho is native of Tengoku; there are no mundane Phoenixes to be found in Rokugan.

Tora (Tiger)

Tora Shapeshifters are extraordinary hunters, and anyone they consider weaker is a potential prey. Tora do not kill for pleasure; they believe they are part of the natural order, removing the weak so that the strong can thrive. They often explore the world alone, silent and unseen as Death itself. Some Tora are even known to roam Toshigoku, where they sharpen their martial skills in epic battles against worthy opponents. When Tora socialize, it is usually with other strong warriors. The bushi of the Lion Clan in particular have earned their respect.



Home Realm: Chikushudo
Spirit Points: 1
Benefit: +1 Agility
• Tora gain a Free Raise on all Athletics, Hunting and Stealth rolls.
• **Predator's Claws:** You may shapeshift while you are in human form to extend or retract razor-sharp claws at the tip of your fingers (this counts as a shapeshifting attempt and requires a Raw Earth roll as normal). While extended, your unarmed Damage rolls gain a +1k1 bonus, but you cannot hold anything in your hands because they are transformed in powerful tiger paws.
• **Natural Form:** Your natural form is which of a large tiger. Use the stats of the tiger (3E, p.279; 3ER, p.295) for the Tora's base animal form.

Forms and Powers

In principle, all Spirit Powers, Shapeshifter racial abilities, and all School Techniques a Shapeshifter knows can be used in any form. However, the Shapeshifter in animal form may find some of his powers or Techniques unavailable or limited. For instance, most courtier Techniques require human speech and the ability to interact with other persons normally (most samurai would consider a talking bird—a Tsuru with Improved Animal Form—to be anything but normal), and some bushi technique work only with specific weapons. Similarly, the power Humanity requires the spirit to be in human form to be effective. Gamemasters should use logic to determine which powers or Techniques are unaffected, and which are not.

Spellcasting while in animal form is a more complex topic. Gamemasters will need to decide whether the kami are able to understand the prayers of a gibbering monkey or a barking dog, and whether the shugenja in animal form can handle spell scrolls properly. We suggest that, in accordance with classic Japanese tales, animal forms can cast spells, but only if the Shapeshifter possesses the Improved Animal Form power (which permits human speech) and they are limited to spells known as Innate Abilities (except Saru Shapeshifters whose animal form has opposable thumbs and can effectively manipulate scrolls).

Finally, Shapeshifter PCs can learn School Techniques via the Alias power, or any of the powers presented in Art of the Duel. Some Techniques require the expenditure of a Void Point to function, but Shapeshifters cannot normally spend Void Points. The Gamemaster may decide that, as an exception to that rule, Shapeshifter PCs can use their Void Points solely for the purpose of activating any School Techniques acquired as a Spirit Power (see Art of the Duel), or with standard training thanks to the Alias power. If the Gamemaster thinks it is unfair to the human characters, he can demand that the Shapeshifter pays once for each such Technique an amount of CP or XP equal to the Technique's Rank in order to enable Void Point use.

One last point to consider, regarding Void Points, is the Humanity Spirit Power. At the Gamemaster's discretion, Shapeshifters that become fully human while using this power can spend Void Points exactly as a regular human would, which includes all standard Enhancements (+1k1 on a roll, 10 points Wounds reductions, etc.).

Growing Up Among Humans

All Shapeshifters have two forms: one animal form determined by their species and one human form. Both are static forms set at character creation and cannot be changed. However, it is common for Shapeshifters to pose as human babies and be raised among unsuspecting humans. This suggests that the human form of the Shapeshifter can be altered to simulate the passage of time and give the illusion that the child is growing normally. By default, the Shapeshifter character has no control over this evolution. He sets his human form's apparent age the first time he interacts with humans, and then he has the choice between instinctively altering his appearance every morning with minute changes that simulate aging, or simply foregoing any effort to emulate the passage of time. The Shapeshift: Age Spirit Power can grant a Shapeshifter better control over his apparent age.

New Spirit Power

Shapeshift: Age (6 Points)

Mastery Level 2

You possess a limited ability to alter your human form. You can change shape to make yourself look any age of your choice (this counts as a shapeshifting attempt and requires a Raw Earth roll as normal). You do not truly change your appearance to which of another person, you merely alter it to look younger or older. Just like your human form is static, your appearance at any age will always look the same. For instance, someone who knew you as a child would recognize you years later if you decided to look like your younger self again. When you change shape from your animal form to your human form, you return to the apparent age you had before changing to animal form.

Transformation

What exactly happens when a Shapeshifter morphs from one form to another? What happens to his clothes and other belongings? The canon rules have never been explicit on this, so *Musha Shugyo* will not be either, but here are suggestions for Gamemasters and players.

There are three options, numbered 1 to 3, described below, and three ways to use them:

- the Gamemaster and player can decide together which of the three options is the norm for their campaign (this is the simplest way to proceed and does not involve any special mechanics);
- they can decide that Option 1 is the default state, and Option 2 and 3 can be bought at character creation, as special Inherent Advantages, with character points (in this case, Option 2 would cost 5 Character Points, and Option 3 would cost 10 Character Points);
- they can decide that Option 1 is the default state at character creation, but options 2 and 3 can be bought at any time as Spirit Powers (in this case, Option 2 is Mastery Level 1 and costs 5 Spirit Points, and Option 3 is Mastery Level 3 and costs 10 Spirit Points).

As usual, the Gamemaster has the final word on this.

Option 1 (The Hard Way)

This option is the one that most limits the Shapeshifter's power level. When changing shape, anything worn or held simply drops on the floor. The Shapeshifter's human form is which of a naked human. He will need to return to the place where he left his belongings to retrieve them and dress up, or transform back into human form somewhere where he will have access to appropriate clothing. If he can not and must revert to human form, the Shapeshifter will have to face the social consequences of his nudity (which would be the least of his problems, if he were to find himself in a combat situation completely unarmed and unprotected)

Option 2 (Imitated Clothes)

With this option, the Shapeshifter must undress completely before transforming. Anything held or worn just drops on the floor. However, the character has the ability to make his human form look like it is fully clothed. Clothes can be simple or complex, and they can appear to be of a quality as fine as the Shapeshifter wishes them to be. For instance, Tsuru always favor elegant clothes with sophisticated designs and patterns, while Tanuki have little concern for their looks and go for practical garbs with little or no adornment. The Shapeshifter may imitate any kind or shape of armor if he wants to, but they do not provide any TN to Be Hit bonus. All Shapeshifter must follow a single rule regarding their emulated clothing: the general colors and tones must reflect those of their natural animal form. Thus a Fushicho's emulated kimono will have bright orange and red patterns, while a Koumori will appear dressed mostly in black and gray. These clothes are part of the Shapeshifter's body, as much as his feathers or coat are part of him while in animal form, and thus cannot be removed. If he wishes so, the Shapeshifter can also appear naked, so that he can don real clothes and armor.

This option slightly limits the power of the shapeshifting ability, but avoids any delicate situations where the Shapeshifter would need to revert to a human form without access to clothing, although he will still have to retrieve his belongings somehow. Players and Gamemasters should decide before the game how far the Shapeshifter's control over his clothes can go. It could range from an extremely limited number of sets of clothes (the reasoning being that the human form of a Shapeshifter is unique and static, and so should be his emulated clothes), to a complete control over a very fluid appearance, allowing the character to change details of his clothes at will (which could include worn mons or other insignias). In any case, even the smallest change counts as a shapeshifting attempt, and thus requires a Raw Earth roll as normal.

Option 3 (Supernatural Transformation)

This option decrees that anything the character has on himself or holds is magically fused with his body when in the alternate form. While it is easy to implement and facilitates gameplay, Gamemasters should be aware that it opens the door for multiple forms of abuse, as the distinction between something worn or held, and something merely touched is quite difficult to make.

Here are a few guidelines:

- Nothing alive (animal or vegetal) can be fused during transformation;
- Things that are automatically transformed include clothes, footwear and armor, as well as anything tied or bound to these, such as a traveling shoulder bag, obi pouches, weapons strapped to the back or at the hip, etc. Anything else is left to the Gamemaster's discretion;
- Under no circumstances the total weight of things fused with the body can exceed one fifth of the Shapeshifter's human form own weight. Light but large things may also be prohibited, at the Gamemaster's discretion.

This option makes Shapeshifter characters extremely powerful, as they are able to smuggle weapons, poison, documents or even nemuranai relatively easily. As a balancing measure, Gamemasters may restrict Shapeshifter characters who opted to transform without undressing to walking speed, limit flying creatures to short hops, and increase all their TN by 10 or even up to 20 if they fused heavy equipment or armor with their body. Gamemasters may also choose to add awakened items (nemuranai) to the list of things that cannot be fused during transformation due to their magical nature.

Character Advancement

The mystics and priests that have detailed knowledge of the Spirit Realms all know that a Shapeshifter's natural form is his animal form. However, mechanically, it is the human form that is considered to be the default state. Whenever a player spends Experience Points to advance his character, he will consider the Traits, Rings, Skills,

etc. that the Shapeshifter possesses while in human form and determine Experience Point costs based on those.

The Shapeshifter School is not a traditional school from an in-game perspective, but it is a true School mechanically. This means that going in or out of this School requires the use of the Multiple School Advantage. Thus, it is generally better to take the Alias Spirit Power at character creation, stay in the Shapeshifter School until all the desired Spirit Powers have been obtained (including the powers from *Art of the Duel*), then Multiple School into a clan School.

Art of the Duel (p.166-170) introduced Spirit Powers that allow some Shapeshifters to learn School Techniques. As explained in this book, the only requirement to learn these Techniques is to spend time around humans. Formal training with a sensei is not mandatory as some spirits seem able to learn Techniques through sheer empathy. However, the Shapeshifter character should be careful when demonstrating knowledge of a School Technique in front of characters who know he did not formally train to learn it. This would certainly raise eyebrows and invite unpleasant questions. After all, spying and stealing School Techniques is a serious crime. Likewise, if questioned about his supposed sensei or his years of training, and if the character lies, he takes the risk to have someone see through his lies, which would incur Honor loss as appropriate. For these reasons, the Shapeshifters who are trying to keep their true nature hidden will spend some time at their school's dojo to receive formal training, for no other reason than to maintain the charade.

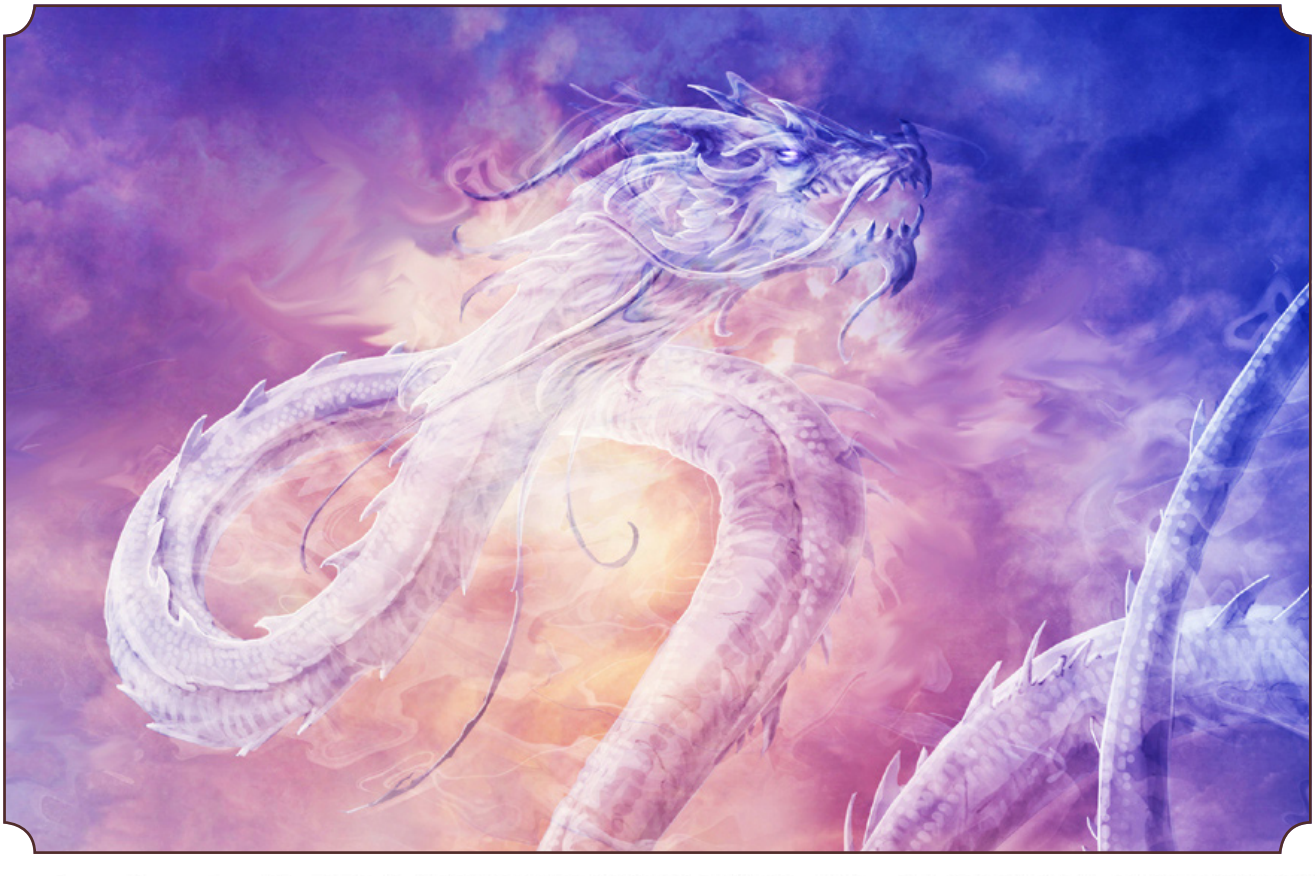
Finally, remember that when buying new Spirit Powers, their Mastery Level is compared to the character's Insight Rank, not his School Rank in the Shapeshifter School.

Shapeshifter School Official Errata

Both instances of "upon gaining a new Insight Rank" should be read as "upon gaining a new Rank in this School". The character does not gain Spirit Points and additional taboos when he gains a new Rank in a School other than the Shapeshifter School.
When buying extra Spirit Points after character creation, the cost is obviously 4 Experience Points per Spirit Point (not 4 Character Points).
The purpose of the Spirit Points listed for each Shapeshifter species was not specified: they are additional Spirit Points gained once at character creation, once you have chosen which species your Shapeshifter will be, and that can be immediately used to buy Spirit Powers as normal.

"Creatures of Rokugan" Inconsistencies

It should be noted that the rules governing the Shapeshifter PCs and the ones applying to Shapeshifter NPCs differ significantly. While this design choice was certainly preferable for game balance, it does create some strange paradoxes. These inconsistencies can be explained from a game-world point of view by the fact that all spirits are unique and their abilities vary greatly from one individual to another. Thus it would seem that the playable Shapeshifter types all belong to a group of spirits that are relatively weaker than the average regarding damage resistance, but stronger in other aspects.



In general, completely ignore the stats and abilities presented for each of the Shapeshifter creatures. They are intended to summarize a NPC Shapeshifter's abilities for exclusive use by the Gamemaster, not to be used as template for the Shapeshifter PC.

One important difference concerns the Spirit Qualities listed p.82. By the rules as written, Shapeshifter PCs do not possess these qualities. It might be because these characters have spent so much time in Ningen-do that they have accumulated 5 Ranks of Mortality (see *Fortunes & Winds*) and have lost their tie to their home realm. If the Gamemaster wishes to bridge the gap between Shapeshifter PCs and NPCs, use the following rules: reduce the character's starting amount of Character Points and give him the Spirit Qualities. The Character Point reduction is left at the Gamemaster's discretion, but should probably be anywhere between 5 and 15 points. Later on, if the character gains the Invulnerability Spirit Power, all damage from mundane sources is reduced to zero instead of halved. Remember that the Spirit Qualities will also make the Shapeshifter PC vulnerable to being magically banished back to his native Spirit Realm. Also keep in mind that Ningen-do is a very jealous realm and that spirits who do not protect themselves properly will quickly become mortal and lose their Spirit Qualities.

Shapeshifters and the Taint

Besides jade, no substance can protect the denizens of Sakkaku or Tengoku from the Taint, which means that the Saru, Fushicho and Ryu Shapeshifters can only rely on jade. However, all the other Shapeshifters, native of Chikushudo, can carry sprigs of cherry or maple wood grown in their home realm. Each sprig at least six inches long is the functional equivalent of one unit of jade, and it can protect its bearer for a maximum of five days (or half that time while in the Shadowlands). All Shapeshifter can also use jade as normal, of course.

Most animal spirits tend to stay as far of the Taint and the Shadowlands as they can, and Shapeshifters are no exception. It is thus difficult to speculate what sort of creature a Tainted Shapeshifter could become, as virtually none has been seen so far. Only one thing is certain: if the Taint inflicts deformities on a Shapeshifter, no amount of transformation will be able to conceal it. Regardless of the form, the evil influence of Jigoku will remain visible in some fashion.

Mike Brodu

Taboo Points for Shapeshifters

Adding a reward mechanic to Shapeshifters

System-wise, a reward mechanic is a mechanic that rewards the player in some manner for behaving in a way that is positive for the game. This is a concept everyone can grasp and most would like to see in their game. Punishing mechanics, on the other hand, punish negative behavior with consequences that are not to the betterment of the player or character (the two are very much unique entities and sometimes have conflicting interests). Glory, Status and Honor are all both reward and punishing mechanics, for they reward a player for acting in a certain way and punish him for breaking the etiquette of the established world (for some, infamy and negative status is the reward, and the opposite the punishment). Taboos, however, function only as a punishing mechanic for Shapeshifters.

But it doesn't have to be that way. Taboos are a very flavorful way of setting Shapeshifters apart from normal characters and giving them their own distinct theme. The problem is that it uses punishment to enforce behavior, and it's not a particularly good way to do so. Instead, an alternative is proposed, one with a reward mechanic in it.

Adding a new element

Instead of scrapping the entire Taboo system, we suggest adding onto it. The core mechanic is this: whenever a Shapeshifter indulges in a Taboo at a time that might hint at his true nature in front of those who don't know it, he gets a Taboo Point.

Taboo Points can be used for the following benefits:

- Spend a Taboo Point to gain +1k0 on a Home Realm or Racial skill rolls. You can spend any number of Taboo Points at once on one roll, to a maximum equal to your Insight Rank.
- Spend a number of Taboo Points equal to the rank of one of your Taboo, plus two, to ignore it for 10 minutes or the duration of 1 scene (Gamemaster's discretion).
- Activate a specific Racial Shapeshifter ability (see below).

Indulging in a Taboo does not mean breaking it, but creating a situation where it is showcased in a manner that might give someone a clue of the nature of the Shapeshifter. In other words, whenever the player takes risks with his character and thus makes the game more interesting, he is rewarded. If everyone just sits on their secrets and does not give anyone a chance to discover

them, they will be just that: secrets that nobody discovers. So share your secrets, it's a lot more fun for everyone involved.

A Shapeshifter only gains Taboo Points from indulging in Taboos that cost as much, or greater than the Shapeshifter's Insight Rank (maximum of 5). As you can see a high Insight Rank Shapeshifter can have real difficulties working in human society. The Taboos that grant him Taboo Points are of such magnitude that some of his powers might be more and more difficult to gather points to fuel. This is intentional. Young and inexperienced, the Shapeshifter might think his role in life is to alleviate human suffering or further the goals and interests of his faction of adoption, but with time the Shapeshifter must come to terms with the fact that he is not of this realm. Many simply leave Ningen-do and go back to their home realm, but those who remain adapt to their circumstances and attempt to serve more as advisors to power rather than the movers and shakers. A Shapeshifter can only retain a number of these Taboo Points between each session equal to his Void Ring or Insight Rank (whichever is higher). He can have as many Taboo Points as he wants during the session, but he can only save so many between sessions. That means if the Shapeshifter is Insight Rank 1 and has a Void of 2, he can only retain 2 Taboo Points between sessions. If he is Insight Rank 5 and has a Void of 4, he can bank a maximum of 5 Taboo Points between sessions.

Let's be honest, these rules can easily be abused. But these rules are optional, and as a Gamemaster I wouldn't trust them to an irresponsible player. But I'm going to assume you are playing with a mature group that knows roleplaying isn't about winning, it's about telling a story and having fun. If you don't think your players can handle mature gaming, I would advise against using these rules.

Home Realm Skills

Each Shapeshifter comes from a spirit realm and the upbringing it receives there influences a lot of its behavior. Shapeshifters can spend Taboo Points to gain +1k0 on rolls of skills associated with their home realm. The skills associated to each Spirit Realm are:

Chikushudo: Animal Handling, Craft, Hunting, Lore: Myth & Legends, Storytelling;

Sakkaku: Deceit, Games, Hunting, Lore: Myth & Legends, Sleight of Hand;

Tengoku: Artisan, Hunting, Lore: Myth & Legends, Meditation, Theology.

The rules suggested only include rules for the three realms associated with Shapeshifters, but anyone can create a list of three skills for the other realms if he feels so inclined (Hunting and Lore: Myths and Legends are common to all Shapeshifters).

Racial skills and abilities

The Shapeshifter races are as many as they are varied. Some grant unique benefits, some extra skills that can be augmented with Taboo Points and some both. Associated skills are the Racial skills that can benefit from the Taboo Points. All Shapeshifter have two skills listed, but if they are noted as "A or B", it means one must be selected at character creation and this choice cannot be changed later. Only the selected skill will be considered a Racial skill.

Bakeneko

Racial skills: Deceit and Stealth

Fushicho

Racial skills: Battle or Calligraphy
Racial ability: The Fushicho are born with an innate sense of right and wrong and find it easy not to stray off their honorable path. Once per session you can spend two Taboo Points to re-roll a failed Test of Honor, keeping the second roll's result.

Inu

Racial skills: Athletics or Investigation
Racial ability: Loyal to the End, the Inu find it difficult to flee from their friends in times of need. Once per session, when defending a friend, an Ally (as per the Ally advantage), or someone with whom you have the Kharmic Tie advantage, can spend as many Taboo Points as you want on Willpower rolls against Fear and Fear-like effects.

Karasu

Racial skills: Meditation and Theology.

Kitsune

Racial skills: Etiquette or Stealth
Racial ability: The Kitsune have passed through the generations the art of being discrete. When using Etiquette or Deceit to blend in and not stick out, you can spend as many Taboo Points as you want on said action.

Koumori

Racial skills: Spellcraft or Theology
Racial ability: The Koumori are so accustomed to seeing off the spirits of the dead that they have a knack for perceiving if someone doesn't belong where he is. With a bit of effort, the Koumori can sense if there is something odd about a person. Once per session you can spend two Taboo Points to determine if one target is under the influence of a Spirit Realm other than the one he is currently in. You do not know what realm or how great the influence is, all you get to know is if he is or is not under the influence. (Rules for Spirit Realms Influence are in Fortunes & Wind, a Second Edition book. Even without these rules, this ability allows the Shapeshifter to perceive the Taint in an individual.)

Kuma

Racial skills: Deceit (Intimidation) or Lore: Shadowlands.
Racial ability: Once per day, you may spend two Taboo Points to immediately enter your frenzied state, even if you did not suffer enough Wounds yet.

Ookami

Racial skills: Battle and Investigation.

Ryu

Racial skills: Lore (the Elements) or Spellcraft
Racial ability: Such proximity to the Elemental Dragons has left the Ryu with a little surprise for those who anger them. Once per session you can unleash the raw elemental fury of the Dragon kin in a blinding barrage of divine might. You can spend two Taboo Points to add +XkX to a Deceit (Intimidation) roll (where X is your Void Ring).

Saru

Racial skills: Athletics and Etiquette

Tanuki

Racial skills: Athletics and Stealth

Tora

Racial skills: Stealth (Ambush) and Traps.

Tsuru

Racial skills: Etiquette and Lore (Dueling)

Usagi

Racial skills: Athletics or Defense
Racial ability: They say that fortune favors the mortal man, but the Usagi are the exception that proves the rule. As blessed as they may be, they seem to be able to turn other's luck against them. Once per day, you can spend two Taboo Points as someone else that you can see is making a Skill or Raw Ring roll. If you do, no dice will explode on that roll.

Rewards

These new mechanics can obviously be badly abused, but if a player takes the right mindset he should be rewarded and rewarded well. Remember, the Shapeshifter can only bank a number of Taboo Points equal to the higher of his Insight Rank or Void Ring, so if he has many points he will be more willing to use them. Spend Taboo Points to earn Taboo Points. This may seem hedonistic to many, but that is the intention.

Oftentimes Gamemasters grant players Experience Point rewards for acting in character and award these extra points at the end of the session. This may work for many, but when it comes to Taboo Points the gratification is meant to be instant. The player is supposed to know exactly what he is being awarded for, in the hopes that it conditions him to continue acting in such a positive and productive manner. Ideally, Experience Points should also be handed out in this manner, but that is another point entirely.

Furei

Nezumi Heritage Tables

Heritage Table 1 (Start Here)

1-4 Bad-Bad Life, roll on Table 2
5-7 Good-Good Life, roll on Table 3
8-0 So-So Life, roll on Table 4

Heritage Table 2: Bad-Bad Life

1-2 Your family was cast out of its tribe a generation ago for failing to protect some of the tribe's pups. In recent years your litter has been accepted back into the tribe, but since you were not born into the tribe you have no Name. Your Name rank begins at 0 and you receive the birth name "S'stch".

3-4 On the day of Naming all the others of your litter received their names from the Nameseeker, when he came to you however, he barely managed to open his mouth before falling over, dead. Since then a similar fate has met all other Nameseekers who have tried to name you. Until the curse is removed (at your Gamemaster's discretion) your Name cannot be raised from it's starting value and you carry the name "Tuptr" (Cursed One).

5-6 When younger you were left to look after some of the tribe's pups while others from your tribe went hunting. Being young and impetuous you took the opportunity to sneak into another tribe member's den and 'borrow' some of his shiny things. Though no harm came to the pups, when your negligence was discovered by a mother checking on her litter it was decided that you would have to be punished. Once per month you must return to your tribe's den and spend a night guarding the pups to make up for your past mistake.

7 When you were little more than a pup you managed to sneak into the den of the tribe's Shaman, unfortunately you knocked over some pots while he was in the middle of an important ceremony. He threw you out of his hut and declared that you would never sneak up on anyone again or else suffer a far worse punishment. Whether or not the Shaman actually cursed you, sneaking around always makes you uneasy. You acquire the Doubt (Stealth) disadvantage whether or not it is a school skill.

8-9 Shortly after your Naming you were led into the Shadowlands by another Nezumi. Unfortunately he fell victim to one of the many dangers of the Shadowlands, though you managed to escape and make it home the terrible end he met has left you shaken to the core. You acquire 6 point worth of the Coward disadvantage, but not the CP for it.

0 Though rare, some Ratlings value personal power and influence over the well-being of the tribe. One such Ratling was the shaman who Named you, and using a twisted version of Name Sharing he has gained power over you. Though the Shaman does not often call on you often when he does you cannot help but obey. You also gain 10 point worth of the Dark Secret disadvantage, but not the CP for it, if your tribe were to discover the curse they would probably kill you in order to weaken the Shaman. There may be a way out of the curse without getting killed, but you havent found it yet.

Heritage Table 3: Good-Good Life

1 When you were a pup, you and another Nezumi decided to go exploring. Your companion fell down a cliff, barely managing to catch an outgrowing plant with his tail. At risk to yourself you managed to save him and scurried home together. Years later that Ratling has grown to become a powerful Shaman and remembered your bravery. You add "Chit" to your name and gain a 4 point Ally (Influence 2 and Devotion 2).

2 The blood of Titchtch'tch the First Remember runs in your veins. His Name carries a great deal of weight and great things are expected of you. If you are not a Rememberer you begin the game with 4 extra character points to spend on Lore skills. If you are a Rememberer you gain the Forever Memory advantage for free.

3-4 Your parents sacrificed their own lives in order to protect you and your siblings; after their death you were raised by a Chieftain and though you have now come of age your bond with him remains. You gain a 3 point Ally (Influence 2 and Devotion 1).

5-6 Your father was a great scout and you spent much time with him learning about and experiencing the Shadowlands. You gain 1 rank in both the Lore: Shadowlands and Stealth skills or 2 ranks in either one.

7 On rare occasions the Name of a Nezumi manifests itself physically, such has happened with you. You add "Jak" to your name and gain the mechanical benefit of Bishamon's Blessing, even though Nezumi are not normally allowed to purchase this advantage.

8-9 Though most things belong to everyone in the tribe you are fortunate enough to hold a possession that you can call your very own. Roll on Heritage Table 3.1: Scavenging.

0 Many yesterdays ago, your grandfather saved the life of a Crab warrior. That warrior turned out to be the pup of the Crab chieftain. As a reward, the human builders agreed to make anything your grandfather desired, and he showed them how to make tail claws. You begin with a set of jade infused tail claws, these tail claws roll and keep an extra dice of damage against those with the Shadowlands Taint.

Heritage Table 3.1: Scavenging

1-2 By scavenging various scraps and off cuts of silk from the humans you have eventually managed to piece together a complete Rokugani kimono - of sorts. You begin the game with a makeshift kimono (poor quality).

3 You have managed to gain enough Rokugani coins to make them into a necklace, you know that they are valuable to humans and so you tend to keep it concealed when they are about. You begin the game with a necklace made of coins worth 1k1 koku (the die does not explode).

4 You possess the kabuto of a samurai, complete with mempo; it is worn and dented and doesn't fit you comfortably but is a prized possession. You begin the game with a kabuto and mempo that, when worn alone, give you +1 to your TN to be hit (note that if you ever wear a complete suit of armor, you gain the armor's standard TN to Be Hit bonus instead, as this +1 is already calculated in it)

5 By driving the teeth of some unknown oni through the leg bone of a human you have fashioned yourself a particularly potent tooth club. You begin the game with a tooth club which ignores an additional 5 points of armor and 1 point of Carapace. Just hope that no human with sufficient knowledge of anatomy will question you on the origin of the bone...

6-7 You have pieced together a shiny necklace from various acquisitions; though you appreciate it purely for it's aesthetic value it does contain several pieces of clear stone that the humans call crystal. You begin the game with a necklace containing several small pieces of crystal.

8 One of your parent's was a great warrior and though she may still live to be called Sunlit she has retired from the fighting life and passed her troll-skin armor onto you. You begin the game with a set of troll-skin armor, which counts as fine quality heavy hide armor.

9 How you came about it is a story that will be told by your tribe for many tomorrows; by skill, cunning and dumb luck you have managed to acquire the bow of one of the giant snake people of death. You begin the game with a Naga bow. (see CoR 3E, p.40)

0 You stumbled across the remains of a fallen samurai, since he was no longer making use of his possessions you decided to claim his sharp-sharp stick. What clan it belongs to is up to your Gamemaster, but it is likely that members of that clan would be interested in knowing how you came upon it. You begin the game with a fine quality katana.

Heritage Table 4: So-So Life

1-2 When you were a child your parents were killed during an attack on your warren; afterwards you were taken in and raised by a venerable chieftain. Your adopted father and you had a great deal in common and you quickly grew close, close enough that his actual son grew jealous. He has forsaken the tribe and has sworn revenge upon you. You gain the Favored-Pup-of-the-Chief advantage and 3 points worth of the Sworn Enemy disadvantage (but not the CP for it).

3 One of your grandparents become close to an Isawa shugenja who was studying the secrets of Name magic. When your grandparent died, the shugenja vowed that one of his descendants would do great things. It would appear that you are the focus of these prophecy. You gain the Great Destiny advantage and 2 points worth of the Haunted disadvantage (but not the CP for it), as the spirit of the Isawa will try to ensure that you act in an honorable fashion (by samurai standards).

4-5 Before the formation of the One Tribe you fought in many battles against your enemies; while it has helped you to hone your skills it has also made you enemies. You gain a rank in any weapon skill and 2 points worth of the Sworn Enemy disadvantage (but not the CP for it).

6 During a trip through the Shadowlands you encountered a half-dead oni. You quickly finished it off but were spotted by many of your pack - not knowing that it was already crippled they assumed that you had slain it single handedly and you are now known as a mighty warrior. You gain the Great Name advantage and add "ch" to your name, but you lose 1 point of Name whenever other Nezumi see you fleeing a battle, as you disappoint their expectations.

7-8 On one of your expeditions to the Shadowlands you stumbled upon a group of Hiruma Scouts under attack by an enormous oni. Your intervention helped the majority of them to escape with their lives however distracting the beast resulted in you taking a severe wound. The Hiruma gunso remains grateful to this day. You gain a 3 points Ally (Influence 1 and Devotion 2) and the Lost Tail disadvantage, but not the CP for it.

9 One of your parents was well known for borrowing things, and he or she was particularly skilled at borrowing things from humans without being noticed. Unfortunately this particular skill eventually cost your parent's life. The last thing he or she successfully stole has been passed on to you; a priceless family heirloom belonging to a samurai somewhere in Rokugan, whether you know it or not this samurai has lost a great deal of face and has vowed to get the item back. Gain an excellent quality item chosen by the Gamemaster and 5 points worth of the Sworn Enemy disadvantage (but not the CP for it).

0 On one of your first trips into the Shadowlands you were separated from the rest of your pack. You eventually made it back to your warren, but not after several days of wandering and witnessing the many horrors of the Shadowlands. You gain the Shadowlands Geography Emphasis of Lore: Shadowlands (if you do not have Lore: Shadowlands then you gain a single rank instead of the emphasis) and 3 points worth of the Coward disadvantage (but not the CP for it).

Bayushi Kinzo

Musha Shugyo #2 Contest Winners

*Only 4 contestants made the effort to write an entry and submit it to us. As a result, we decided to publish them all, in no particular order, to thank them for their participation. Here is their work. Enjoy! -**Mike Brodu***

Ithich'erc's's, Builder of the Grasping Paw tribe

School: Builder (rank 2; insight 136)

Air: 3	Earth: 2	Fire: 3	Water: 3
		Agility: 4	

Skills: Athletics 2, Craft (Pottery) 5, Craft (Tailoring) 3, Defense 2, Hunting 2, Investigation (Scrounging) 5, Stealth 3
Advantages: Clever Tail (4 points), Luck (3 points), Fleet (3 points)
Disadvantages: Coward (3 points), Phobia: undead (2 points), Driven: fixing the men of earth (1 point)

Background

Ithich'erc's's was a born in a renowned tribe, deep inside the Shadowlands. Ithich was a cunning and smart young pup whose curiosity sometimes put him in trouble. He was especially fond of weapons scavenged from the dead bodies of humans or goblins. When he was still young, he discovered the hard way that some corpses could rise again. This almost cost him his life, and he is now very careful about the undead, even by Nezumi standards.

As he grew up, he became more and more interested in building and fixing things, such as weapons, armors, and other useful items. He studied under the master builder of his tribe, an old Nezumi who soon intended to make Ithich his heir and taught him all he could. Together, they travelled all across the tribe's territory and even beyond, near the Great Wall built by humans. Finding things to scavenge and then fix was easy there.

But one day a great army came from the other side of the Wall. Ithich spied on it and followed it. He was used to human samurai, how they walked, how they fought and even how they died. But these samurai were strange: they didn't sleep, they didn't eat nor drink. Strangest of all, they were entirely made of the same dirty brown stone-like matter.

After a time, this strange looking army faced another one, full of goblins and other foul creatures. Ithich was certain the samurai would die and then rise. So he was very surprised when after the first blows, the warrior didn't bleed but instead they shattered. At this moment, he realized they were not humans, nor dangerous creatures of the Shadowlands, and probably were not even alive. And if they were not alive, then they were objects that could be scavenged and fixed!

After the clash, Ithich scurried to the battlefield and collected fragments of the broken warriors to bring them back to his camp. He is now obsessed with fixing those strange looking warriors and make them walk again.

Adventure Idea

Challenge: The PCs are sent by the Phoenix Clan to retrieve the destroyed nemuranai called Tadaka's Children. These animated clay figures were lost during the Four Winds' march to the City of the Lost. The Elemental Council wishes to study their remnants, hoping they can understand how Tadaka created them.

Focus: As they venture into the Shadowland, looking for the fragments, the PCs find some of the Children, crudely fixed with makeshift string and sinew, wood, mud and resin. It looks like someone is already trying to repair the Children.

Strike: The PCs will have to find who is responsible for "fixing" the Children, and convince Ithich to let them take back the focus of his obsession.

David Meniere

Sojobo, Kenku Lord

School: Kenku Swordsman 5/ Kenku Duelist 3

Air 4	Earth 5	Fire 5	Water 4	Void 6
Reflexes 7		Agility 7	Perception 6	

Honor: 5.7

Skills: Athletics 5, Battle (Skirmish, Mass Combat) 6, Defense 8, Etiquette 3, Games: Riddles 6, Hunting 4, Iaijutsu (Challenge, Focus, Strike) 8, Kenjutsu (Katana) 8, Medicine 3, Lore: Bushido 3, Lore: Myths & Legends 6, Meditation (Zanji) 5, Theology (Fortunes, Shintao) 9
Advantages: Clear-Thinker, Quick, Strength of the Earth x2, Social Position (Kenku Lord)
Disadvantage: Ascetic

Background

Kenku are natives of the mortal realm, though they are extremely long-lived and wise. Sometimes helpful, sometimes mischievous, they seldom interact with Men. When they do, however, the story always ends up being the stuff of songs and legends. One such story is that of Sojobo, said to be a lord among Kenku. Sojobo dwells near a mountain monastery and usually takes the shape of an old yamabushi. One day, centuries ago, he noticed a small boy clad in the attire of a monk crying bitterly. Sojobo asked what was wrong and the boy said that he was the son of the great daimyo of a neighboring province, whose lands had been conquered. The boy was sent to the Kurama Monastery so that the conqueror could not be accused of entirely wiping out a noble family. Sojobo took pity on the boy and proposed to help him regain his name and lands. In exchange, the Kenku said that, one day, he would come to take away one of the boy's heirs to train him or her. The boy gave his word as a samurai that it would be so, and Sojobo, being friends with the Kurama monks, began instructing him in the ways of the sword and greater strategy.

As the years went by, the little boy became a great warrior who, after countless adventures, managed to build an army and retake his ancestral lands. Sojobo gave the young daimyo a Kenku mask, saying that when the time came, the chosen heir would take the mask back to the monastery.

Eight generations went by. History passed into legend and all that remained of the young lord's promise was the mask, hanging on a wall in the personal shrine of his house.

Adventure Idea: The Kenku Mask

Around the time of Autumn Equinox (in Rokugan, this is approximately the twenty-first day of the Month of the Monkey on the common calendar, and the Month of Shiba on the formal calendar), the players come to the small town of Kurama (which can be anywhere in Rokugan the Gamemaster thinks appropriate) in time for the Kurama no Hi-Matsuri, or Kurama Fire Festival. People line up on their houses holding Taimatsu (pine torches) at the Hour of the Rooster and proceed to honor the local Mountain Fortune and ask for plentiful harvests. They march the streets chanting and dancing, following the Mikoshi (portable shrine) being carried across the town. At about midnight, the procession ends by a large bonfire in front of a shrine and a great feast begins, where rice cakes and sake flow freely!

Challenge: The player characters are enjoying Kurama no Hi-Matsuri when a young girl, no more than 14 and carrying a large travelling pack, bumps into them. She apologizes for her manners and asks about the road to Kurama Monastery (which is just behind the large bonfire and shrine). Then she hurriedly goes away, vanishing into the crowd. The players notice a strange red mask on the ground, a scowling and big-nosed face. It looks valuable. If they choose not to keep it themselves, they will clearly see who does pick it up. The girl is nowhere to be found. The next morning, as at least some of the player characters are probably recovering from a hangover, the local magistrates come looking for them. Apparently, someone stole a mask from a Lord Yoshitsune, the Provincial daimyo, and the trail led the magistrates to Kurama. The magistrates are courteous and unless the player characters are Ronin, they'll not accuse them of anything if they have the mask or know where it is. They'll want the mask back and will ask many questions about the girl.

Focus: Lord Yoshitsune is secretly in town himself. If he learns that the girl went to Kurama Monastery he'll ask the player characters to bring her back alive and unharmed. He promises gifts, Clan favors, money – whatever the player characters wish, as long as they're discreet about this business. He'll not say who the girl is, only that he wants her alive and unharmed.

Strike: The girl is in fact Yoshitsune's youngest daughter, Kimiko. She was to be married away as part of a political arrangement with another Clan (maybe one of the player character's!) and, learning about the Kenku legend of her House, took the mask and ran away to meet Sojobo. She is not at Kurama Monastery, but the monks there may remember the old story and tell it to the players. What do the players do? Sojobo is happy to take Kimiko as his student, ruining her father's political plans. He is a powerful warrior, so fighting him may not be the best idea – but he may accept a match of wits, or test the player characters worthiness by quizzing them about the Tao and the Fortunes. If Kimiko is taken away from Sojobo by guile (that is, if the player characters somehow cheat Sojobo), he'll lay a curse on them all! Or perhaps the player characters manage to remind Lord Yoshitsune that his famous Ancestor agreed to let one of his heirs become Sojobo's apprentice – which is the honorable thing to do, but may cause all sort of political trouble for him, maybe even war.

Daniel Bezerra

Tsunemoto
holder of the Hiruma Techniques

Author's note: The following text is intended to give you multiple ways of using the NPC Tsunemoto. He can be used as an adventure hook, a vital part of your campaign, or a little episode as friend or foe. Feel free to change any detail that wouldn't match your campaign. He's a very powerful NPC, so it's important to remember how reluctant he is to help or solve any problem for your PCs.

School/Rank: Hiruma Lost Techniques 5, any technique GM finds adequate.

Air: 2	**Earth: 3**	**Fire: 4**	**Water: 3**	**Void: 3**
Reflexes: 5			Perception: 5	
Honor: 4		**Status: N/A**		**Glory: N/A**

Skills: Divination 5, Instruction (Hiruma Bushi) 6, Lore: Samurai 4, Medicine 3, Meditation 5, Storytelling 3, Athletics 4, Kenjutsu (Katana) 7, Iaijutsu 5, Defense 7, Stealth 4
Advantages: Absolute Direction, Ambidextrous
Disadvantage: Antisocial

Background

Many generations ago, Hiruma Tochi, the sensei of the Hiruma Dojo, met a Kenku named Tsunemoto. As they were both students of sword, they agreed to duel to compare their techniques. After many hours dueling, it became apparent that neither of them would best the other, but mutual respect had blossomed and both swordsmen became fast friends.

Six years later, Tochi was leading a Crab detachment into the Shadowlands, where they were ambushed. After an epic battle, Tochi was the last to Crab left standing, although he too was felled. Tsunemoto arrived on the battlefield, but too late to save his friend. He killed the remaining Shadowlands beasts and returned to the dying Tochi. With his last breaths, Tochi asked Tsunemoto to take his daisho and a set of scrolls on which Tochi described his school's secret technique. The Kenku promised him to find worthy samurai to whom he could pass on the techniques of the Hiruma School. But Tsunemoto's standards are so high that he has not yet found a worthy recipient. And so, the rest of the Crab Clan, which never learned of the last Hiruma sensei's request, believes the Hiruma Techniques to be lost forever.

Tsunemoto is a Kenku, a race that superstitious humans know as demons famous for their mastery of swordsmanship. Depending on how much you want your Rokugani Kenku to resemble Japanese mythology (in which he would be known as a Tengu), he can appear to be a human with a red face and an enormous nose, a man with a dog's head, or even an ogre. On the other hand, he can look like a normal human with "something hard to describe in his appearance that makes him inhuman". He may even be a Shapeshifter, like many Japanese demons. However, there is one element that should be always present: the "one-tooth geta", also known as "Tengu geta", a pair of sandals with a single transversal support below each, upon which the wearer must maintain balance.

Tsunemoto always keeps his word, as do all Kenku. However, unlike other Kenku, he was always curious of humans and their ways, so each summer, he would travel from one mountain to another to observe the people of Rokugan on the way. Mindful of his vow to Tochi, he searches for talented and promising young samurai to whom he could return the Hiruma Techniques.

Tsunemoto behaves very impulsively and seems unpredictable. He may appear human, but he is definitively not, so sometimes it's hard to understand his actions. However, if he ever takes someone on as a student, he acts very much like a typical dojo sensei. He is strict, gives precise commands and is incredibly gifted when it comes to teaching and explaining the way of the sword.

Aside from his vow to "resurrect" the Hiruma School, Tsunemoto has no desire to take part in Rokugani affairs. Even though he will teach a bushi the Hiruma techniques, he will not help him if he finds himself in trouble. He considers this another trial for his student. If one student dies, then he will simply look for another one worthy of his teachings. Under almost no circumstances will he interfere in human affairs. Finally, he is an expert in divination, but he keeps that knowledge to himself.

Adventure Ideas

Introduction Option 1

Challenge: This can be the beginning of a campaign. Young soon-to-be samurai travel to a hard-to-reach mountain to gain the opportunity to become Tsunemoto's students.

Focus: Young party members (before gempukku) arrive at Kaiu castle. There, they are meant to join the Kaiu Tactician School. However, a Kitsu who is staying at the castle as a close friend of the Kaiu Daimyo, says that they should journey to one of the mountains in the region to "meet their destiny."

Strike: Deep in a valley leading to a mountain that is believed to be haunted, Tsunemoto observes the young samurai. He must decide whether or not are they worthy of his teachings. He may lead them into traps or difficult situations where they'll have the chance to show their characters' strengths and skills. Days later, it's possible that they'll come back to Kaiu castle and before any question is asked, the Kitsu says that they (or one of them, because not all of them may be accepted or accept Tsunemoto as sensei) should be allowed to explore the way of sword on their own. From now on the chosen will train by themselves and visit or be visited by Tsunemoto when the time is right (remember that he travels a lot, so he'll probably be always close to his adepts).

Introduction Option 2

Challenge: Samurai reside in a teahouse for a few days as a flood prevents travel from the city. They don't know that they are being tested.

Focus: Among the people in the teahouse is an old heimin (who is Tsunemoto in disguise). He'll observe the samurai and try to interact with them, asking them to play Go, egging them on to show off their skills or trying to push them into conflicts with other residents (by disguising as someone else, or provoking them and other samurai).

Strike: How will they react to the troublesome old heimin? Will they brag about their skills? Will they confront other samurai or try to settle things in a calm manner? If they make a good impression they (or one of them) may be rewarded with the opportunity to learn from Tsunemoto. You may also look at this matter from the other side. What if one of the NPCs is Tsunemoto's student, or if they are part of one of his tests?

Mateusz "Craven" Wielgosz

The Saga of Yoshitora

Yoshitora, Kitsune Shapeshifter

School: Shapeshifter 1

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 2	Void 2
Honor: 2.0		**Glory: 0.0**		**Status: 0.0**

Skills: Hunting (trailblazing) 3, Lore: Myths and Legends 1, Kyujutsu 3, Stealth (sneaking) 3, Knives 2, Athletics 2, Jiujutsu 1, Investigation 1, Defense 1, Medicine 1
Advantages: Absolute Direction, Fleet (3), Quick
Disadvantages: Cast Out (6), Black Sheep, Obligation (Kenku) 4 (Note: these disadvantages do not apply to the Empire, but to his Kitsune kin and the Kenku, although members of the Fox Clan will instinctively treat him according to these disadvantages)
Spirit powers: Pack Soul, Eyes of the Night, Hunter's Bane, Improved Animal Form
Taboos: Must marry a worthy woman within 1 year.
Equipment: simple kimono and sandals, yumi with 10 willow leaf arrows, knife, and one day's worth of rations.

Background

Yoshitora is a young Kitsune who, like so many of his kind, is curious about the mortal realm. Like many before him, he left the spirit realms and is now wandering the Emerald Empire. The circumstances of his arrival in Ningen-do are far from being commonplace, though: he was taken away as a young pup by a pack of tsuno who found the idea of having a Kitsune "pet" amusing. His parents were desperate to save him. They were fortunate enough to be acquainted with a respected Kenku swordsman named Akiya who agreed to help the Kitsune. Yoshitora was rescued and amazingly survived the ordeal without any lasting physical or emotional scars. Sadly though, Akiya died in the rescue. As compensation for the death of Akiya, the rest of the Kenku demanded that Yoshitora be handed over to them, upon him reaching maturity. They assured the Kitsune that Yoshitora would not be harmed in any way, but refused to elaborate further on the matter. While his parents agreed to this, Yoshitora did not.

Just before the Kenku were expected to come and take him, Yoshitora fled. He wandered alone and hunted for food, until one day he met a strange couple. One was tall and seemed to glow with an otherworldly power; the other was short and silent, though her smile could communicate volumes. For mysterious reasons of their own, they guided Yoshitora to a portal to the Realm of Mortals. He emerged in Kitsune Mori, and left quickly when his family appeared, gathering the aid of their human allies.

He realized that on his own he was unlikely to survive long, and thus set about trying to find worthy humans to befriend. Further complicating his life, he is driven by a spiritual compulsion to find a worthy woman who will accept him in marriage.

Adventure Idea 1: Will you marry me?

Challenge: While wandering the roads, preferably in rural areas some distance away from large settlements, the PCs meet what appears to be a young ronin, little more than a boy. He has no swords, but does not bow as low as a peasant or eta would. He speaks with a strange accent and introduces himself as Yoshitora and asks if they would agree to let join him them, since they seem to be headed the same way.

Focus: Yoshitora seems to know little of proper etiquette. He does not use suffixes at all, he asks direct and personal questions that polite people would never consider asking, and does not seem averse to touching people or dead flesh. In short, he has less understanding of proper behavior than your average Crab berserker. However, he does not seem to wish to give offense, and will often apologize and attempt to correct his behavior should people express their displeasure with it.

Strike: Yoshitora is, at his core, a likeable person, and should be played such. He is kind to everyone he meets (even eta), he does not lie, and he is fascinated by everything he sees. He just has no knowledge at all of proper etiquette, though he is eager to learn. He will also be paying a great deal of attention to any female PCs, especially if they show any signs of tolerating or even liking him - he knows a year passes quickly, and he must find a worthy woman to marry.

Moshibaru Yoshitora newly inducted member of the Crab

After only a short time in the Realm of Mortals, Yoshitora heard of the Crab Clan. Though not permanently scarred by his experiences with the cruel tsuno, Yoshitora came out of the situation with a hatred of those who would take pleasure in inflicting pain. The Crab, with their endless war against the Shadowlands, are to Yoshitora's mind the ultimate fighters against the sort of beasts that tortured him. He made his way to Crab lands and successfully undertook a Twenty Goblin Winter. While stationed on the Wall he met Hida Hyakurin, a young and attractive samurai-ko.

She was strong, bull-headed and coarse, but loyal to a fault and a good leader to the bushi under her authority. She commanded the respect of her subordinates and showed some decent tactical and strategic prowess. With some more years and experience she might be promoted to commander of a tower.

Moshibaru Yoshitora did not care about this, though: he had found the woman he must marry.

As it happened, she was being rotated off duty to tend to familial matters, and Yoshitora arranged to get rotated off at the same time. He discretely followed her home, pondering how best to gain her attention. She knew who he was, and seemed to like him. So he decided to do things in a straightforward manner: he waited until the middle of the night, and in his fox form, he snuck into her room with flowers. He was caught in the middle of the act and Yoshitora turned to human form and - stark naked - proclaimed his love for her. Hyakurin was at a

loss for words, as was her mother who came to see what the noise was. To everyone's great surprise, Hyakurin and Yoshitora were married soon after and their comrades on the Wall were eager to congratulate them, even if some were a bit jealous that Hyakurin was now taken.

Yoshitora's duties are still much the same as they were after he first entered the Crab Clan: he is a scout attached to Hyakurin's battalion, and often acts as her personal bodyguard. His nature is not known to any outside Hyakurin's immediate family, and they have kept it quiet thus far.

School: Shapeshifter 2

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 2	Void: 2
Reflexes: 4		Perception: 3		
Honor: 1.6		**Glory: 1.0**		**Status: 1.0**

Skills: Hunting (trailblazing) 4, Lore: Myths and Legends 1, Kyujutsu (yumi) 4, Stealth (sneaking) 4, Knives 2, Athletics (running) 3, Jiujutsu 2, Investigation 2, Defense 2, Medicine 1, Heavy Weapons 1, Kenjutsu 1, Lore: Shadowlands 1
Advantages: Absolute Direction, Fleet (3), Quick, Way of the Land (Shadowlands)
Disadvantages: Cast Out (6), Black Sheep, Obligation (Kenku) 4
Spirit powers: Alias, Pack Soul, Eyes of the Night, Hunter's Bane, Improved Animal Form, Animal Tongue, Kami Tongue, Unnatural Speed
Taboos: Must marry a worthy woman within 1 year, cannot lie, cannot have elemental spells cast on him.

Adventure Idea 2: Jade petals

Challenge: While on or near the Wall, the PCs are approached by Yoshitora. He is dirty and out of breath, fresh from an excursion into the Shadowlands. He informs them that he is in need of immediate help. He makes sure they have jade, then leads them into the Shadowlands. While they are preparing, he explains that he found a small field of jade flowers growing in the Hiruma lands. He hurried back to get some aid in retrieving samples, and as the troops on duty have better things to do than go flower picking, he needs someone else to help.

Focus: On their way out, Yoshitora explains that he was on a mission and did not have time to take a sample while he was out there, and he saw some goblins and ogres not too far off. The field was in a fairly open area without any cover to hide behind, and Yoshitora did not wish to come back on his own without someone to help keep watch and cover his back.

On the way the party sees a mass of goblins and an ogre war party (both large enough that the group do not fancy their chances in facing them). The field of flowers is not more than a few hours out, though it was the middle of the day when Yoshitora picked the characters.

Strike: As promised, there is a small patch, no more than a dozen paces across, of vibrant jade-green flowers growing in the middle of the waste of the Hiruma lands. However, there is also a large group of goblins heading towards it. If the PCs hurry they can make it to the field a minute or so before the goblins, who seem intent on ruining it. The goblins are numerous enough that the PCs might very well all die if they face them. What do the PCs do? Do they leave the flowers and return to the Wall (while Yoshitora encourages them to do otherwise)? Do they hurry to the field and take a few flowers and run? Do they take their chances against the goblins (and likely make enough noise to attract the attention of the other, larger group they passed earlier)?

The flowers, despite their looks, are not made of jade and do not seem to have any jade-like properties. However, they are pure, untainted, and grow without aid in the desolate waste and are of great interest to at least one Kuni. If the PCs let the field be destroyed by the goblins, the flowers are gone for good. If they saved a couple of samples, the Kuni might be able to grow these on their own. If by some miracle the PCs manage to kill the goblins, the field is safe until the Crab can organize a proper expedition to the field.

Hida Yoshitora
Crab scout

Yoshitora and Hyakurin have been married several years now, and Yoshitora has a hard but good life. He has a worthy wife, the respect of his comrades and a young son. While his life is good, it is of course not perfect. Scouting the Shadowlands, even as close to the Wall as he usually works, is never pleasant, and there is always the risk of death, or even worse. Almost as bad as this, is the ribbing he gets from his fellow Crab over his refusal to drink anything but tea or water. There is a slowly growing rumor regarding his Kitsune nature due to his shadow showing his true form, though most of those who know it for a fact do not comment on it to anyone. Stories of a servant in Yoshitora's household being seen chasing a fox pup while yelling "Ichiro, get back here!" did not help to silence the rumors.

These rumors have hurt Yoshitora's, as well as Hyakurin's, chances at promotion. Still, they do their duty and do not complain.

School: Shapeshifter Rank 3

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
Reflexes: 4	Willpower: 4	Agility: 4	Perception: 4	
Honor: 2.0		**Glory: 2.0**		**Status: 1.5**

Skills: Hunting (trailblazing) 4, Lore: Myths and Legends 1, Kyujutsu (yumi) 5, Stealth (sneaking, ambush) 5, Knives 2, Athletics (running) 4, Jiujutsu 2, Investigation (notice) 3, Defense 3, Medicine 1, Heavy Weapons 1, Kenjutsu 1, Lore: Shadowlands 1
Advantages: Absolute Direction, Fleet (3), Quick, Way of the Land (Shadowlands)
Disadvantages: Cast out (6), Black Sheep, Obligation (Kenku) 4
Spirit powers: Alias, Pack Soul, Eyes of the Night, Hunter's Bane, Improved Animal Form, Animal Tongue, Kami Tongue, Unnatural Speed, Heavenly Armor
Taboos: Must marry a worthy woman within 1 year, cannot lie, cannot have elemental spells cast on him, cannot drink alcohol, shadow reveals true form, must return any items dropped in his presence.

Adventure Idea 3: Baby sitting

Challenge: Yoshitora fulfills two roles on the Wall: primarily as a scout attached to Hyakurin's unit, and sometimes as a bodyguard to his wife. He is still a vibrant person, likable and fond of making dirty jokes, and possesses great curiosity and desire to learn. His son, for better or for worse, takes after him in this respect.

Little Ichiro has gone missing several days after expressing great interest in the Kuni lands. Though not more than 6 years old, Ichiro has shown a great deal of independence and could very well have decided to visit the Kuni lands on his own, especially after having been told that he should not.

Yoshitora and Hyakurin are unable to go after him themselves: they are on duty. They will ask the PCs to help if the PCs already know them, or if the PC's group is rumored to have a good scout. A servant (a young girl of 10) will lead the PCs to Hyakurin and Yoshitora's modest house where they may begin the search.

Focus: As feared, Ichiro ran off to explore the Kuni land himself. He has inherited his father's shape shifting powers, but has not yet mastered them - he will be stuck in fox shape until returned to his parents. Tracking a small creature like a fox with a couple of days' head start would be an exercise in futility for most people. Luckily, Ichiro does not make much of an attempt to hide himself unless directly threatened, and the PCs will come across several people who recall having seen a fox the previous day, should they think to ask.

Strike: Yoshitora and Hyakurin live quite near the Kuni lands, so little Ichiro should make it there just before the PCs. Now the PCs have to find a small fox and protect it from whatever nasty stuff may lurk in the Wastes.

Hida Yoshitora troubled Crab

As the years have gone by, Yoshitora has had his ups and downs. He was finally allowed to study the Hiruma Scout techniques, he and his wife still love each other, despite the arguments and quarrels that all marriages must endure, their children are strong and healthy, and Ichiro has been accepted into the Hiruma School. However, the rumors of his Kitsune nature have had time to make their way around. Though the Crab are generally more impressed by actions than heritage, Yoshitora never quite managed to overcome the stigma of being non-human. Also, his increasing list of taboos means it is nearly impossible to keep to them all the time, and each time he violates one he looks older and more tired. After a particularly bad incident causing much loss of face, he told his wife he could, if he put his mind to it, become fully human. In true Crab form she responded by hitting him as hard as she could in the face for making such a stupid suggestion.

The worst of the situation is this: the rumor of the fox who serves the Crab has started spreading outside the clan. His former kin have never stopped looking for him, and they are coming closer every day. Though he has not seen them in many years, Yoshitora still feels affection for his Kitsune family, and his time among the Crab has given him a greater respect for duty. Yoshitora has no idea what he will do when he meets them again, but one thing is certain: he cannot run any more.

Schools: Shapeshifter 3/ Hiruma Scout 1

Air: 3	**Earth: 3**	**Fire: 4**	**Water: 3**	**Void: 4**
Reflexes: 4	Willpower: 4	Agility: 5	Perception: 5	
Honor: 1.8		**Status: 2.0**		**Glory: 2.0**

Skills: Hunting (trailblazing, wilderness lore) 5, Lore: Myths and Legends 1, Kyujutsu (yumi) 6, Stealth (sneaking, ambush) 6, Knives 2, Athletics (running) 5, Jiujutsu 2, Investigation (Notice) 4, Defense (unarmored) 4, Medicine 1, Heavy Weapons 1, Kenjutsu (katana) 2, Lore: Shadowlands 1
Advantages: Absolute Direction, Fleet (3), Quick, Way of the Land (Shadowlands)
Disadvantages: Cast out (6), Black Sheep, Obligation (Kenku) 4
Spirit powers: Alias, Pack Soul, Eyes of the Night, Hunter's Bane, Improved Animal Form, Animal Tongue, Kami Tongue, Unnatural Speed, Heavenly Armor
Taboos: Must marry a worthy woman within 1 year, cannot lie, cannot have elemental spells cast on him, cannot drink alcohol, shadow reveals true form, must return any items dropped in his presence.

Adventure Idea 4: A death in the family

Challenge: A bandit gang has been seen operating somewhere in Crab lands. The PCs are sent to investigate and clean up. When they arrive, the local lord, Hiro—a low-ranking retainer who is little more than a ji-samurai—claims he and his ashigaru have taken care of the matter already.

Focus: Rumors of the bandits still circulate. Though few people can claim to have actually been robbed directly, small amounts of food have disappeared where the bandits have been. The areas hit before Hiro cleaned up were ravaged and everything of worth taken. Should the PCs choose to investigate the area where the lord claims to have slain the bandits, they will find rotting corpses. No swords, but a few spears and broken arrows. Not enough to equip all the corpses. If they look closely they will notice that a few of the kimonos on the corpses have patches torn off right where a mon would be placed.

Strike: The 'bandits' are actually a mixed group of fox spirits and their allies of the Kitsune family. They are tracking down the rumor of a fox spirit living amongst the Crab. Hiro used their presence as an opportunity to raid a few villages for personal gain, and then blame it on the traveling 'ronin'. The Kitsune met with Hiro, asking for information. Pretending to be of aid, Hiro invited them in, fed them poisoned food and killed those who could not flee. The corpses were stripped of their swords and mon, and dumped in a clearing some distance away.

All the Kitsune died, but a few of the fox spirits escaped. If the PCs find them, they will ask for their help in avenging their kin, and maybe helping them find Yoshitora. How will the PCs prove the duplicity of the local lord, with only the word of a few foxes to testify against him? If the PCs know Yoshitora, will they tell the foxes? Perhaps most importantly, Yoshitora's father was

one of the Kitsune killed. How will Yoshitora react when he hears the news?

Hida Yoshitora
venerable scout

Many years have passed since Yoshitora first set foot into the mortal realm. He and his aging wife are nearing retirement. Yoshitora's spirit nature means he is still strong and healthy, though Hyakurin is getting on a bit. Their children are both grown and serving their clan well, and grandchildren may very well come soon, as Ichiro, who took the name Toshiro at his gempukku, is getting married come the summer.

Yoshitora, amazingly, has avoided confrontation with his Kitsune family, and he suspects that they are holding back from meeting him. He has no idea why. What he does know is that he must return to them at some point and accept the fate he has avoided for so long. This will have to wait until his wife is dead, though.

For now he scouts the Shadowlands as he has done for years, or stands on the Wall and works with the Falcon's Strike.

Schools: Shapeshifter 3/Hiruma Scout 1/Falcon's Strike

Air: 3	**Earth: 4**	**Fire: 4**	**Water: 3**	**Void: 5**
Reflexes: 5		Agility: 5	Perception: 5	
Honor: 2.1		**Status: 3.0**		**Glory: 3.0**

Skills: Hunting (trailblazing, wilderness lore) 6, Lore: Myths and Legends 1, Kyujutsu (yumi) 7, Stealth (sneaking, ambush) 7, Knives 2, Athletics (running, climbing) 6, Jiujutsu 2, Investigation (Notice) 5, Defense (unarmored) 5, Medicine 1, Heavy Weapons 1, Kenjutsu 2 (katana), Lore: Shadowlands (geography) 3
Advantages: Absolute Direction, Fleet (3), Quick, Way of the Land (Shadowlands)
Disadvantages: Cast out (6), Black Sheep, Obligation (Kenku) 4
Spirit powers: Alias, Pack Soul, Eyes of the Night, Hunter's Bane, Improved Animal Form, Animal Tongue, Kami Tongue, Unnatural Speed, Heavenly Armor
Taboos: Must marry a worthy woman within 1 year, cannot lie, cannot have elemental spells cast on him, cannot drink alcohol, shadow reveals true form, must return any items dropped in his presence.

Adventure Idea 5: Family Matters

The PCs should be friends of Yoshitora and know about his Kitsune nature for this CFS.

Challenge: Yoshitora asks the PCs to do him a favor. He needs a letter delivered to his family—his true family—and cannot go himself. The problem is that he does not know exactly where they are. He can give them approximate directions, but little more.

Focus: If the PCs accept, Yoshitora will hand the PCs a large, sealed scroll. He tells them of the portal to Chikushudo that he exited all those years ago, and the names of his family. The PCs then have to travel to Kitsune Mori, get past the Fox (who will be only slightly more willing to aid them if they are told the PCs are helping a Kitsune), find the portal and discover how to get through, travel through Chikushudo and find Yoshitora's family. That's the easy part...

By the time the PCs find the rather shy Kitsune, they should be thoroughly frustrated and annoyed at the whole situation. The Kitsune read the scroll, and then say it should go to the Kenku and expect the PCs to deliver it. If the PCs agree, they will spend yet more time and frustration on trying to find the Kenku. They may even have to travel to another Spirit Realm, as most Kenku reside in Sakkaku, not Chikushudo.

Strike: The Kenku are watching the PCs and have been watching them ever since they left the Mortal Realm. They see this as a test of Yoshitora's character: one measure of a man (or fox) is how he chooses his friends. If the PCs are willing to find the Kenku after the Kitsune sent them on their way, this speaks well of Yoshitora.

Eventually, the PCs will find the Kenku, who silently accept the scroll and bow to the PCs. They will, fortunately, be led to a portal to Ningen-do that takes them close to home.

The scroll, should the PCs choose to read it, essentially says little more than "I'm sorry I ran away. I'll be coming back once my wife has passed away. Please be nice to my friends." (It should be a little more detailed and eloquent than this, tailored to fit the Gamemaster's needs).

Adventure Idea 6: Aftermath

After these encounters with Yoshitora and his mysterious past, the PCs or Game Master might be a bit curious as to what exactly the Kenku want with him. This is intentionally left vague to better fit in the Gamemaster's campaign. Yoshitora is an NPC and therefore only a support to the players' stories. Making a large story about him would subtract from the PCs' position as the center of the game.

Still, for those who wish for something semi-official, here are two suggestions:

1) The Kenku simply wanted to take Yoshitora in for a short while and teach him some things about Akiya and the Kenku. After all, Akiya willingly gave his life to save Yoshitora, with no agreement for compensation in return. The Kenku, though they are sad to lose a great swordsman, see no reason for the Kitsune to owe them much of anything - they just wished to give Yoshitora the proper opportunity to honor his rescuer. The matter was simply a private one and they did not want to tell the Kitsune of the details.

Yoshitora spent much of his life running from the Kitsune who came to find him. The Kenku, realizing their silence led to a great deal of trouble all around, have simply let the matter lie. Once Yoshitora returns, they will have their ceremony to honor Akiya and let Yoshitora go on his way. After all, Yoshitora has proven to be a loyal and useful member of his chosen family, and he has done well in his life. He showed the strength of character to stick to his choice once made, has had few regrets, and is returning to see if he can make up for his earlier mistakes. In short, he has become a good man.

That is, really, all the Kenku wanted from him.

2) The Kenku wanted Yoshitora to train with them. Akiya was a noted warrior against evil and chaos, and with his death, the Kenku felt the need to honor his memory by training another warrior to take his place. As Yoshitora eventually fell in with the Crab and did his duty there, the need to create another warrior against the evil of the universe was filled, if not exactly as the Kenku had intended. The effort the Kitsune have gone through to find Yoshitora is motivated purely by their offended sense of honor. Yoshitora's family gave their word and Yoshitora did not honor this. While the majority of Kitsune are not directly involved - it's mostly a family matter - they will side with Yoshitora's family if the matter should come up.

Hida Akira

Imperial Cartographer

Welcome to the first installment of The Imperial Cartographer. In this issue, we present to you its first map: the Great Tree.

What is the Great Tree? It is whatever you want it to be: the lofty dwelling of a venerable Kenku sensei, an unorthodox Nezumi warren, the home of a family of Kitsune spirits, or perhaps a Naga outpost.

It is designed to be easily adapted to whatever your campaign needs it to be. Future maps in the Imperial Cartographer articles will follow the same guidelines.

You will find the map of the Great Tree on the next page, and below is a list of possible room functions:

1A: Entry hall/Guard post/Depot

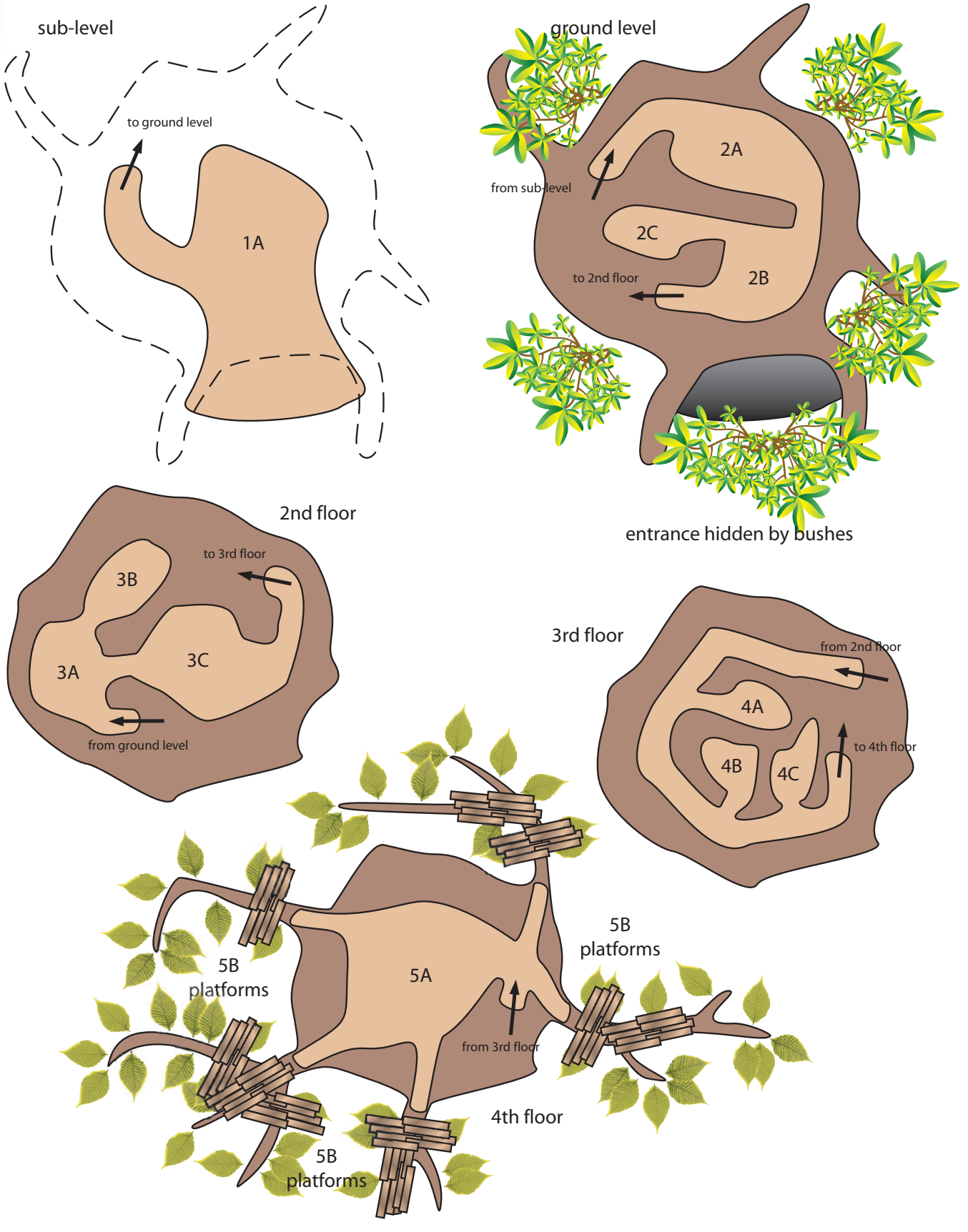
2A: Storeroom
2B: Antechamber/Storeroom
2C: Guard post/Storeroom

3A: Antechamber/Training room/Secondary dojo
3B: Master's bedchamber/Dojo's storeroom/Guard post
3C: Mess hall/Main dojo/Communal room

4A-C: Chambers/Barracks

5A: Observatory/Communal room/Barracks/Armory
5B: Lookout platforms

Kalajel


sub-level
to ground level
1A
ground level
2A
from sub-level
2C
to 2nd floor
2B
entrance hidden by bushes
2nd floor
to 3rd floor
3B
3A
3C
from ground level
3rd floor
from 2nd floor
4A
to 4th floor
4B
4C
5B
platforms
5A
5B
platforms
from 3rd floor
4th floor
5B
platforms

Integrating Nonhumans into a L5R Game

Something rustled in the leafy undergrowth. Hiruma Nobuo froze, his knuckles whitening on the saya of his katana; behind him, a bowstring creaked as Shiba Jiro nocked and drew.

From the bushes, a whiskered snout suddenly poked out, framed by a pair of beady eyes.

"Samurai-men are nervous, yes," a soft voice rasped. "Draw-draw arrows on poor Nr'k'tek…get ready sharp-sharp swords."

Nobuo puffed out an exasperated sigh and glanced back, but the Shiba had already relaxed his draw and lowered his bow. "That creature," Jiro said, "is very fortunate not to have an arrow protruding from its right eye."

The Nezumi emerged from the bushes and blinked at the Shiba. "Right eye? Thought you were aiming at left eye, no?"

Jiro frowned at the Nezumi, who was suddenly hissing through long, yellowish teeth. He glanced a question at the Hiruma, who shrugged and said, "He is laughing."

"Laughing?" The Phoenix's frown deepened towards a scowl, but he quickly composed himself and turned hard eyes back to Nr'k'tek. "So, Nezumi-san, have you learned anything useful?"

"Have learned many useful things, yes."

Jiro waited for the Nezumi to go on, but the creature's black eyes just shone at him. Finally, Jiro sighed. "I mean anything that is useful to us, here and now…about the path ahead?"

Nr'k'tek cocked his head to one side, blinked and brushed a cobweb from whiskers. "Path is clear, yes. No one, nothing as far as river. Chek'tr'tek waits there, keeps-keeps eyes on trail leading to bridge. Samurai-men safe to go on."

The Shiba stiffened. "Safety is not the issue. We shirk from nothing that might stand in our way. We simply want to be ready for it—"

"What is the delay?"

All turned to the new voice. Doji Sakita followed her Kakita yojimbo around a muddy spot in the path, stopping as soon as she saw the Nezumi. Her eyes narrowed a fraction, then turned to Hiruma Nobuo.

"Have we stopped because of this…creature?"

"Yes…insofar as the Nezumi is reporting on the path ahead. He says the way is clear to the river."

"And do we believe it?"

Nobuo frowned. "I see no reason we should not. Our Nezumi friends have proven correct about the way ahead so far."

Sakita curled her lip. "I will say this again. I do not like leaving the Emperor's Road. Whatever time we save is at the cost of much increased risk. And I certainly do not like placing our trust so heavily in these…" She paused, a word forming on her lips, then vanishing as she thought better of it. "…these Nezumi," was all she finally said.

"The Nezumi have long since earned our trust, Doji-san," the Hiruma snapped. "Saying you do not trust them amounts to saying you do not trust the Hiruma—"

Sakita raised a hand. "My apologies," she said, bowing. "I spoke in haste. I am not accustomed to traveling across-country like this. We trade the sure path the road provides, and the protection of the magistrates patrolling it, for the guidance of these creatures. I confess that it makes me nervous."

Nobuo bowed, but his distaste for the Doji and her temperament remained clear. To Nr'k'tek, who had been following the exchange between the humans as well as his fractured Rokugani allowed, it wafted off the Hiruma as a reek of barely-restrained impatience whenever he spoke to the Doji. The Nezumi bobbed his head in a passable bow and said, "Understand Doji-samurai-san does not like forest, but Nezumi keep samurai-men safe. Get you through forest and on way to final going-place fast-fast and safe, yes."

Sakita glanced at the Nezumi, then offered a quick and shallow bow. "Very well. Our journey is an important one and delays are not acceptable. It is against my better judgment, but I accept your assurance."

Nr'k'tek wrinkled his nose at the fume of disdain rolling off the Doji and her Kakita yojimbo, but simply bowed again. "Good-good, Doji-samurai-san. Will move ahead and check path again. Make sure safe-safe."

The Hiruma bowed much more sincere thanks, while the Shiba just nodded his head and scanned the nearby bushes. Nr'k'tek turned and scampered off into the underbrush, leaving the humans and their clashing smells behind.

He moved quickly, quietly, slipping between the trees, over and under fallen logs, through the underbrush. His path was certain, the scent markings he'd left on his way back from the river guiding him like beacons. He soon found his way back to Chek'tr'tek, perched where he had left him in a tree overlooking the river. Without breaking stride, Nr'k'tek clambered up the tree to a stout branch just below the other Nezumi. Wrapping his tail around the trunk for support, he said, "The humans are coming. Slowly, but they are coming."

"Everything they do is slow. Slow, noisy and smelly."

Nr'k'tek hissed a short laugh. "Especially smelly."

"I have sensed nothing since you left," Chek'tr'tek said, his nose twitching, tasting the breeze. "I'm sure there are human bandits on the other side of the river, though. They were there just Yesterday."

"And maybe before that," Nr'k'tek said, looking up from a patch of fur he'd been licking clean of tree sap. He frowned, struggling to recall, then shrugged. "The Rememberer would know."

"We won't see the Rememberer before…another Tomorrow, I think. Or maybe another after that. The humans will just have to take their chances. Our agreement was only to bring them to the river."

Nr'k'tek nodded, scratched an ear, then said, "I like the Doji's fan. It's very bright."

"It is. Not as shiny as the Kakita's sword, though."

The two tensed at a sudden movement on the far bank, but relaxed when it proved to be a browsing rabbit. Were it not for the river, Nr'k'tek thought, that would be food now—

"So if the bandits attack and the Crane die," Chek'tr'tek said, "you will take the fan and I will take the sword. Agreed?"

Nr'k'tek licked his lips at the thought of fresh rabbit, but nodded to Chek'tr'tek. "Agreed. But maybe they don't have to die. We didn't say we wouldn't cross the river after them. And they do sleep, don't they?"

Chek'tr'tek bared his teeth. "Yes, they do."

In Legend of the Five Rings, Gamemasters and players are presented with a role-playing world that is rich and detailed, but also very complex. Even if a Gamemaster chooses to forgo the ongoing, canon storyline in favor of campaigning in, say, some obscure part of the Empire's history, an alternate timeline, or even a future period (such as Heroes of Rokugan has done), the setting will still involve an elaborate weave of geographical, social and cultural threads, frequently tangled by political intrigue, magic and war. Certainly, of all of the roleplaying game settings, Rokugan is, if not the most complex, then it is very close to it!

So why, then, would any reasonable Gamemaster or players want to make things even more convoluted? Why introduce the complicating factor of Nonhuman characters into a world where even humans range from honored nobility to little more than property?

Nonhuman characters—as NPCs, but particularly as players—will make life more difficult for everyone involved in the campaign. However, Nonhuman characters that are well-constructed and, more importantly, well-played, can offer new opportunities for adventures, new and interesting challenges for both Gamemaster and players, and generally enhance the "otherworldliness" of Rokugan, which is, after all, a land of the magical and fantastic.

The Nonhuman Races of Rokugan

What, exactly, does the term Nonhuman mean in The Legend of the Five Rings? At its most basic, it means, of course, any character that is not Human. However, this encompasses a vast range of creatures, from Ashalan to Zombies. Particularly adventurous Gamemasters may certainly be willing to allow players to play Oni, Mujina or Trolls. However, this is not recommended. Most such Nonhumans are abominations to Rokugani and would have no place in the Emerald Empire as anything but adversaries to be destroyed. Those few that might be considered beneficial (or, at worst, neutral,) such as the glorious but incendiary Houhou, or the aquatic Ningyo, are simply impractical as player characters; they either have overwhelming cultural or spiritual connotations, or are too physiologically restricted or simply too alien to be reasonably playable. If a Gamemaster is, nonetheless, going to attempt to integrate such an outlandish player character into his campaign, it is strongly recommended that the ramifications be carefully considered, as the consequences for game play and balance are likely to be extreme. In general, such creatures should remain restricted to NPCs filling specific roles in the Gamemaster's adventures (having said all of that, some ideas are offered elsewhere in this issue of "Musha Shugyo" regarding how, if one really wishes, some of these races could be incorporated, in some fashion, into a campaign.)

However, there are several Nonhuman races that definitely do lend themselves for play as player characters, because they have, historically, already integrated to varying degrees in Rokugani society. These include the Naga, the Nezumi, Shapeshifting spirits and Ashalan. The Ashalan, an ancient race of immortal sorcerers from The Burning Sands, will be dealt with in a future issue of "Musha Shugyo" focused on The Burning Sands and its denizens. In the meantime, those interested in more information about the ashalan will find a write-up in the "Creatures of Rokugan" supplement to the Third Edition, and much more detail in "The Legend of the Burning Sands" supplement.

Each of the remaining Nonhuman races suited to player characters—the Naga, the Nezumi and Shapeshifters—are briefly summarized below. Again, much more detailed information about each of these races, including character generation and mechanics, is available in the "Creatures of Rokugan" supplement. Additional information can also be obtained from "The Way of the Naga" and "The Way of the Nezumi" supplements, for each of those races.

The Naga

The Naga are an ancient race of serpent-men, whose civilization predated the rise of Man and the fall of the Kami. They are characterized by a racial "group-mind", called the Akasha. The Akasha, to which all Naga are connected, contains the collective wisdom of all Naga that have ever lived and influences all Naga in their thoughts and actions. It was by studying the Akasha, following brutal internal and external wars, that the Naga determined that their society was beginning to weaken and decline. Worse, an enemy they named The Foul (a term that seems to encompass both the Shadowlands Taint and the Lying Darkness) was awaiting their eventual extinction, leaving it free to threaten all of creation. Hoping to prevent this catastrophe, the Naga entered The Great Sleep, a magical slumber which would allow them

to preserve their race and culture and stand against The Foul in some future age. They emerged from The Great Sleep in time to participate in the momentous events in Rokugan surrounding the Second Day of Thunder and the great war against Fu Leng, and a subsequent conflict with the Lying Darkness and its infection of the Dragon Clan. Naga relations with the clans throughout this time were generally good, albeit punctuated by suspicion and misunderstanding. The Naga finally concluded that, although they were able to help the humans stand against The Foul, it was necessary to resume The Great Sleep against their being needed again in some future age.

A comprehensive history of the Naga, as well as detailed mechanics for character generation and play, including Advantages and Disadvantages, Castes, Schools, Paths, Advanced Schools, Spells and Heritage, are given in "Creatures of Rokugan" on pages 16 to 45.

The Nezumi

The Nezumi are a race of humanoid rats that once developed a vast empire across most of the modern Shadowlands. Originally bred by the Naga as livestock, once the Naga entered The Great Sleep, they evolved, becoming intelligent and eventually developing a sophisticated civilization. But when Fu Leng fell from Tengoku on what the Nezumi have named "The Terrible Day", their largest city was obliterated by the impact and the rift to Jigoku that formed in the aftermath. With the hub of their civilization gone and many Nezumi dead, their empire began to collapse. The survivors scattered, forming ad hoc groups that eventually grew into tribes. Unfortunately, the trauma of The Terrible Day inflicted insidious harm on the remaining Nezumi, damaging the ability of the vast majority to remember events for more than a brief time. For the next eleven centuries (on the Isawa calendar of Rokugan), the Nezumi lived as uneasy neighbors with the humans of Rokugan, whose fortunes rose following the fall of the Kami. In many cases, tribes of Nezumi allied themselves with humans, in pursuit of a common goal. Unfortunately, however, not all relations between the Nezumi and humans were amicable. There were periodic clashes, culminating in a campaign by the Unicorn to destroy the Nezumi in the Shinomen Mori in 1167. Even in the absence of open hostilities, many humans continued to view the Nezumi with suspicion and disdain.

In 1166, the Nezumi were finally reunited in The One Tribe, under the great chieftain Kan'ok'ticheck. However, only a few years later, the Nezumi, en masse, transport themselves into the realm of Dream, where the revered beings known to the Nezumi as Transcendents dwell. A great battle is waged there, the Nezumi facing powerful avatars representing the collapse of Dream—a collapse that could spread to the other realms. They prevail, saving Dream and the Transcendents, but are unable to return to Ningen-do. As a result, only a few Nezumi now remain in Rokugan.

A comprehensive history of the Nezumi, as well as detailed mechanics for character generation and play, are given in "Creatures of Rokugan" on pages 46 to 81.

Spirits (Shapeshifters)

Unlike the Naga and the Nezumi, the Shapeshifters are not a specific race. The term "spirit" actually encompasses a wide range of creatures whose only shared characteristic is that they come from realms other than Ningen-do, the realm of mortals in which Rokugan lies. Accordingly, a Human who dies and travels to Yomi, the Realm of Blessed Ancestors, and then returns to Ningen-do would be a spirit. For our purposes, however, the term "spirit" is taken to mean those Nonhuman beings that are native to other Realms and generally have the ability to assume different forms; accordingly, hereafter, we will refer to these creatures as Shapeshifters. Most are from Chikushudo, the Realm of Animals. Some, however, originate or have an affinity with Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief, and Tengoku, the Celestial Heavens. It should be noted that beings native to other Realms, such as Jigoku (the Realm of Evil), Gaki-do (the Realm of the Hungry Dead) or Toshigoku (the Realm of Slaughter) are not considered here. As noted previously, creatures from these Realms are generally unplayable because of their profoundly evil, chaotic or alien natures (although aspects of some of these Realms can reflected in spirit characters through specific Advantages and Disadvantages for spirits described in the "Creatures of Rokugan" supplement).

The Shapeshifters of Chikushudo, Sakkaku and Tengoku have no history that is meaningful in Human terms. The passage of time and corresponding sequence of events in those Realms are generally unknown and unknowable to humans and, in any case, aren't particularly meaningful in game terms. Creatures who originate in those Realms have, in effect, always coexisted with those Realms. Chikushudo and Sakkaku in particular lack common points of reference with Ningen-do. Gamemasters may elect to have Shapeshifters from Tengoku remember the assault on the Celestial Heavens by Fu Leng, an event that was reflected in Ningen-do by the war between Daigotsu and the Four Winds. Otherwise, though, any history possessed by a Shapeshifter is likely

to be a personal one, reflecting its own background—particularly in terms of any past experiences it may have had in the Realm of Mortals.

What generally is common to all Shapeshifters is their ability to change, while in Ningen-do, between a Human form and a form that reflects their essential nature. For example, Inu, or dog-spirits from Chikushudo have a Human form, but can also assume the shape of a dog. Bakeneko or cat-spirits can likewise assume either Human or cat form, and so on. In either form, Shapeshifters tend toward behavior that similarly reflects their basic nature. So, Inu are generally friendly and loyal, while Bakeneko are more playful and mischievous. Additionally, Shapeshifters have a number of specific abilities that reflect their otherworldly character. They possess special forms of Disadvantages called Taboos (for instance, a Shapeshifter may have a Taboo that prevents it from crossing running water, or always casting the shadow of their true animal form). They tend to be resistant to effects that influence or control their minds and can automatically detect passages to their home Realm. A variety of other Spirit Powers are available, as well.

Detailed mechanics for Shapeshifter character generation and play are given in "Creatures of Rokugan" on pages 7 to 15.

Nonhumans in Rokugan

So, a player has pitched the idea of playing a Nonhuman in a campaign. The Gamemaster is intrigued…but wants to know more about the good, the bad and the ugly of allowing a Nonhuman player character into the game. Certainly, the first stop is "Creatures of Rokugan" (and, if they're available, other relevant supplements) to ensure everyone understands the mechanical aspects of creating and playing a Nonhuman character. But mechanics are only part of the picture; take it only this far, and the character is quite likely to play as what amounts to a Human with fur, scales or otherwise unusual abilities. To play a Nonhuman is to play a character that is very (very!) different than the usual denizens of Rokugan. So the next thing to consider is, just how do the people of Rokugan view the Nonhumans who share their world?

One of the most prominent aspects of Rokugani society is its closed nature, which is predicated on the existence of The Celestial Order. In essence, The Celestial Order stipulates one's place in the hierarchy of existence, from the Heavens above, down through the Emperor—the personification of Heaven on earth—then progressively lesser classes of nobles and commoners, finally to the lowliest eta (a detailed description of The Celestial Order is given in the "Emerald Empire" supplement, on pages 62 to 73). What makes The Celestial Order important in Rokugani society is that every person belongs in it somewhere, and that that is true in previous lives, the current one and future incarnations. As a result, the people of Rokugan are, by nature, suspicious and distrustful in the extreme of those they consider outside The Celestial Order. This even includes people from beyond Rokugan's borders, who may appear Human but lack a place in the Order; they are gaijin, a derogatory term for such foreigners that emphasizes their origin and existence outside the divine structure of creation.

It shouldn't be surprising, then, that Nonhumans would fall firmly into this "outsider" category—some much more so than others. As is probably clear by now, many Nonhumans are simply unplayable as characters, because they are so antithetical to Rokugani samurai that they would be instantly shunned or attacked. But even the playable Nonhumans—the Naga, the Nezumi and the Shapeshifters—are likely to be viewed with great wariness, as they have no clear place in The Celestial Order and, generally, would be taken to fall outside of it completely. The extent of this wariness, and the likely reaction of Rokugani, are a product of several things—which sort of Nonhuman involved, a character's Clan, the character's own, particular background, and the time-period of the campaign.

Naga

Naga, from the point of view of contemporary Rokugan, are viewed by the people of Rokugan with a mixture of wonder and respect, tempered by caution. By standing alongside the humans on the Second Day of Thunder, the Naga earned considerable respect among the people of the Empire. Moreover, the serpent-men are an intelligent and, in Human terms, a generally honorable race, with a sophisticated if alien culture. The Unicorn and Dragon are most likely to view Naga favorably, because both have close ties between prominent members of their respective Clans and the Naga—Akasha, in the case of the Unicorn, and Mirumoto Mareshi, in the case of the Dragon. The Crab also have a positive, if somewhat more complex relationship with the Naga. Originally close allies against the Shadowlands, the Crab felt betrayed when the Naga abruptly turned their attention to the Lying Darkness lurking amid the Dragon. However, the Naga subsequently resurrected Hida Yakamo, the Crab Thunder, using powerful Pearl Magic, which softened these feelings of betrayal. Of the remaining Clans, all generally respect the Naga, even as they find them uncomfortably alien in character; the Scorpion are the most likely to be suspicious, as the Naga are an unknown and largely unknowable people, making the usual Scorpion tactics of manipulation and subterfuge of little use. A Scorpion would not likely be openly hostile to a Naga, but neither would he trust or want much to do with one.

Of course, for campaigns set in the Empire's past, the Naga are likely to be viewed somewhat differently. After 1124 on the Isawa calendar of Rokugan, but before the events around the Clan Wars and the Second Day of Thunder, the Naga were newly awakened, very strange to the people of Rokugan, and had not yet proven themselves as allies. The view of Naga then began to change quickly, depending on specific events—for example, in 1130, the Crab and Naga were close friends and allies against the Shadowlands; in 1131, however, the Naga had "abandoned" the Crab to face the Lying Darkness and the Dragon. In 1132, the Naga had resurrected Hida Yakamo and joined him to the Akasha. A Crab character played through this period would likely find his opinion of the Naga swinging wildly. Before 1124, to the beginning of Human history, the Naga were locked in the Great Sleep, with only a handful of scouts awakened. During this period, Naga would have been essentially unknown to the people of Rokugan. The few awakened scouts would have done their utmost to observe, but not interact with humans, to avoid provoking unwanted interest in their sleeping civilization. Had humans encountered them, they would have quite likely been viewed as monsters or demons, with only quick diplomacy forestalling conflict.

Nezumi

Contemporary Rokugani are generally aware of the Nezumi, since interactions with the ratlings were common throughout most of recorded Human history. As noted, however, not all these interactions were friendly ones. Moreover, the generally xenophobic Rokugani were suspicious and disdainful of these creatures, who exhibit much more of a bestial nature than do the Naga. While the latter have a sophisticated culture built around elaborate cities, and show deep (albeit alien) knowledge of art and science, the Nezumi, as known by humans, are much more like their smaller rodent cousins. They dwell in underground warrens literally burrowed into the ground, and live a primitive, hunter-gatherer lifestyle. Those who can speak Rokugani do so in an awkward, repetitive pidgin dialect, making them appear simple and unintelligent. Their penchant for taking things that don't belong to them only create further friction with the people of Rokugan. In actuality, Nezumi possess a complex culture and spirituality that are remnants from their pre-Human historical civilization, but most Rokugani do not know or care about this. They simply see Nezumi as primitive, savage creatures, little better than beasts.

Of the Great Clans, the Crab are, by far, the most likely to treat the Nezumi as something resembling equals. The Hiruma, in particular, have a long history of living and working with Nezumi in the Shadowlands, and have come to respect their skills and abilities in hunting, tracking and killing tainted creatures. The Mantis, being a pragmatic people and, moreover, having a history of contact with the seafaring Chipped Tooth Tribe are also likely to view Nezumi in at least a neutral way. The Scorpion view Nezumi with a similar pragmatism, but borne more of a desire to understand how they can be manipulated, rather than a genuine desire for friendship. Of the remaining Clans, there are factions within the Lion, Dragon and Phoenix who have recently come to build relationships with Nezumi tribes. The oldest of these is the Lion, whose bushi Matsu Gohei developed allies among the Broken Shinbone Tribe during the Clan Wars. Forty years later, the Dragon likewise allied with the Broken Shinbone, who had established a warren in that Clan's lands. Even more recently, Shiba Ningen, Phoenix Master of the Void, had been working at building a relationship with the Green-Green-White Tribe, whose warren was located in his Clan's lands. However, most members of these Clans—and essentially all of them, prior to the Clan Wars—are likely to join the Crane in viewing the Nezumi with particular disdain, shunning them and wanting nothing to do with such "creatures". Finally, the Unicorn are the one clan to generally treat the Nezumi with outright hostility, likely because their horses react so poorly to the ratlings' mere presence; if their horses don't like the Nezumi, then the Unicorn certainly will not.

Of course, in 1169, the vast majority of Nezumi were lost to the realm of Dream, so in any campaign set after that time, Nezumi will be rare. Those most likely to have dealings with humans are the Chipped Tooth who, as a tribe, generally did not answer the One Tribe's call to travel to Dream and remained in Rokugan, plying the seas aboard various ships—notably the Lion Clan's Deathless. Only a few Nezumi remain in other parts of Rokugan, particularly the Shinomen Mori, in the company of Nintai, the last survivor of the race known as the kitsu. In total, as of 1169 on the Isawa calendar, there are as few as fifty Nezumi left in Rokugan. Ironically, among the more learned samurai of Rokugan, these few survivors may be viewed with great reverence and respect, because the sacrifice their race made in Dream effectively saved all realms, including Ningen-do.

Shapeshifters

For the most part, the attitude of Rokugani towards Shapeshifters is less driven by a particular Human's clan of origin and more by the general view of Shapeshifters by all humans in the Empire. Rokugan is a magical land, so interactions with Shapeshifters, while certainly not common, are not rare. Perhaps more importantly, stories abound amongst the Rokugani about encounters with enigmatic, shapeshifting spirit folk. Some of these will be true, or at least contain kernels of truth; some will be fiction and most will be embellished through the telling. Some will have happy endings—and some not.

Portals between Ningen-do and the various Spirit Realms occur in various places; some last only for a time, or while a particular set of conditions exist, while others are fixed. Spirits can use these portals to cross into Ningen-do, or can move between realms by other means. In fact, aside from major instances such as Oblivion's Gate or the forest known as the Kitsune Mori, the canon reference material is largely silent regarding the specific nature of crossings between Realms. Accordingly, Gamemasters are generally free to establish the ways and means of crossing as they see fit. When Shapeshifters do cross into Ningen-do, they may do so inadvertently, and may wish nothing more than to return to their home Realm. Such beings are likely to avoid contact with humans, unless they are forced to seek assistance in their quest to return home. Other Shapeshifters, on the other hand, may cross quite deliberately, with a specific purpose in mind, the achievement of which they may or may not be willing to share with humans. Finally, some Shapeshifters could cross out of simple curiosity, with a desire to learn more about Ningen-do and the strange (to them) beings that inhabit it. A Shapeshifter player character could fit into any of these categories.

Regardless of how the Shapeshifter comes to be in Ningen-do, or what purpose it has being there, the reaction of Rokugani is going to be first governed by whether or not they even recognize the Shapeshifter for what it is. All Shapeshifters are capable of assuming Human form, so with care regarding its behavior, observance to its taboos and so on, a Shapeshifter may be able to pass as a Human more or less indefinitely. If its spirit nature becomes known, things obviously become more complicated. A Shapeshifter is likely to be treated with a mixture of reverence and caution, with the relative proportion of each depending on the type of Shapeshifter. Fushicho (phoenix spirits) and Ryu (dragon spirits), because of their association with Tengoku, are likely to inspire awe and reverence; incidentally, of all of the Nonhumans, beings from these realms are the only ones that actually do fall into The Celestial Order, as Tengoku is firmly established at the top of the hierarchy of creation. Kitsune (fox spirits) will also likely be treated with reverence, albeit a warier kind, because of their reputation as generally honorable creatures but with a definite streak of mischief (note that in Japanese folklore, Kitsune are associated with Inari, the kami of fertility, agriculture, rice and industry; if a Gamemaster wishes to include this association in a campaign, Kitsune will also have a heavenly connotation). Inu (dog spirits) are known to be brave and loyal, so are likely to be viewed with honor and respect. Other Shapeshifters, however, have more capricious natures and will probably been approached warily by humans. Bakeneko (cat spirits) and Saru (monkey spirits) are known tricksters, being associated with Sakkaku, and can be quite destructive. Tanuki (badger spirits) are temperamental, while Tsuru (crane spirits) tend to be vain and jealous; both can be great friends, but also terrible enemies so, again, would be treated with caution by Rokugani. A further complication is that even the most learned of Rokugani simply aren't certain how the realms of Chikushudo and Sakkaku are related to the established realms of The Celestial Order.

In any case, a known Shapeshifter is going to face an ambiguous and sometimes difficult relationship with the people of Rokugan. Some will revere the character, some will be afraid, and some may even consider the Shapeshifter dangerous, shunning or even threatening it with harm. Unlike the Naga and the Nezumi, for whom there tend to be broader, more general views regarding the entire race, reactions to Shapeshifters will be more complex and nuanced, more situational and more individual. Gamemasters who introduce Shapeshifter player characters must be prepared to tailor reactions to those characters in a way that logically fits the circumstances of their campaign. For example, if Kitsune are taken to be associated with Inari, the Rokugani Fortune of Rice, then the arrival of a Kitsune character in a village suffering from famine could result in an outpouring of desperate supplication—or violence. And either one may lead quickly to the other!

Playing Nonhuman Characters

So our Gamemaster has agreed to let one of his players play a nonhuman character. Everyone understands the mechanics of creating and playing the character, and the Gamemaster and players have a pretty good idea of how such a character is likely to be viewed and treated by the people of the gaming world. But how to play the character itself?

The overriding concept for the player, that should inform and color how he or she plays the character, is that of Nonhuman. The character is, literally, not Human; he or she is an alien from the perspective of the Human-

centric land of Rokugan. A well-played nonhuman will exploit this fact, because it will make the character more fun to play and more fun to play with. Of course, a player can take this too far and turn an alien "otherworldliness" into farce. The trick is to find a balance between playing what amounts to a Human with some different abilities, and a character so extremely exotic that it becomes a detriment to everyone's enjoyment of the game.

The starting point to help a player understand what he or she is getting into by playing a nonhuman character is the Game of Twenty Questions on pages 82 to 84 of the Legend of the Five Rings Third Edition core rulebook. Obviously, some of the questions have to be modified to apply to a nonhuman. For example, if playing a Nezumi, the first question would be "What tribe does your character belong to?", while the third question would be "To which School does your character belong i.e. a berserker, a builder, a Rememberer, and so on?" A little thought will allow the player to adapt the Twenty Questions to the nonhuman in question, and go a long way to defining the character.

But this isn't quite complete. There's a twenty-first question—"Given the basic racial nature of your character, how would you expect him to behave?" The following sections offer some thoughts regarding each of the playable nonhuman races, to help in answering this most important question. One caveat, though…ultimately, the individual quirks and nuances brought to a character by its player will do a great deal—perhaps the most of anything—to develop, shape and bring that character to life. Everything below is intended to offer the basic "bones"; as always, it is the player who will add the "meat".

Finally, remember that each of these races has its own, particular world-view. The Rokugani view of The Celestial Order is by no means shared by the Naga, who see themselves as a much more ancient race, with a better-established birthright to the world; were it not for The Great Sleep, then in time, humans could easily find themselves vying for mastery of Rokugan with the Naga. The Nezumi likewise do not see themselves as necessarily inferior to humans, but rather recognize the great harm that time and circumstances have done to their race. And as for Shapeshifters, their existence apart from Ningen-do renders their belief system just as enigmatic as nearly everything else about them. However, its reasonable to assume that they have no questions about their place in creation, no matter how humans may see them.

Naga

So Naga are serpent-men…and that means a cold-blooded, emotionless sort of behavior, right? Not exactly. Certainly, their serpentine nature can form an essential foundation, providing a stolid, rather distant sort of basic character. But the Naga represent an advanced civilization, which has delved deeply into art, science and magic. Therefore, it's reasonable to expect a Naga to be intelligent and insightful. An ancient race, they are likely to see humans as relative newcomers. A Naga character will, therefore, probably view humans with a detached curiosity, and a wariness that will depend on how much exposure the character has had to humans. A Naga who has spent a great deal of time in the company of humans will be more at ease with a race that, in his or her view, may very well have been nothing more than primitive savages before the race entered the Great Sleep for the first time.

Of the other races, Shapeshifters are likely to be subject to an even greater mix of interest and caution; unless a particular Naga has experience dealing with Shapeshifters, they will probably be an object of fascination to the intelligent and inquisitive Naga. Nezumi, on the other hand, rate a special place in Naga culture and history. The ratlings were, quite literally, livestock, raised by the Naga as food and pets. Encountering a Nezumi, most Naga will respond with a deep racial bias…they are just "cattle", after all. Again, of course, there are exceptions in the case of individual Naga. For example, in contemporary Rokugan, the Naga Zamalash developed a close relationship with a tribe of Nezumi that helped protect him and his people from an earthquake that struck the Naga city of Kalpa. This won't be true for most Naga, though!

It's important to note, however, that the Naga are not merely a race of cerebral philosophers. They are fierce warriors, but also artists, poets and musicians; they mate, produce offspring and form strong bonds of family and friendship (examples such as Zamalash show that Naga bonds of companionship can cross even the widest racial divides.) Among the Naga, the group-mind known as the Akasha only intensifies these relationships; of course, without remarkable circumstances, such as those that affected Hida Yakamo, the Akasha is something confined only to the Naga. If a Gamemaster allows multiple Naga into a campaign, then he or she should be clear on the extent to which the Akasha links these characters. A useful reference here is "The Way of the Naga" supplement, but in its absence, a Gamemaster should note that the Akasha is not truly a "hive-mind", but rather a collective unconsciousness, allowing for a shared, general awareness of surroundings and feelings. In fact, individuality is a particular hall-mark of Naga. Accordingly, Naga characters should be played as distinct individuals, albeit with a shared and collective racial memory that will color their words and actions. And speaking of words, remember that Naga, in spite of the Human appearance of their upper bodies, converse in a distinct racial language that is further enhanced by the sharing of perceptions and concepts through the Akasha. When talking to humans, then, Naga speech will be sibilant and quite deliberate, with frequent pauses to consider, in the absence of the Akasha, just what is being said. This will be true whether the language being used is Rokugani or Naga, and represents a particularly good outward way of roleplaying the alien nature of the Naga.

The physical nature of Naga offer further roleplaying possibilities. They are, essentially, humanoids with serpentine lower bodies and tails rather than legs. This not only provides them with a peculiar locomotion, it also makes thing like stairs designed for Human feet and legs a problem. Depending on the particular Bloodline, some Naga, such as Constrictors, can be imposingly large; others, such as Greensnakes, are smaller than humans. Naga also undergo periodic physical changes.

For example, females shed their tails and grow legs while pregnant, while all Naga will occasionally molt, shedding their skin; this is particularly true as they're growing. "Playing up" such attributes further accentuates the nonhuman nature of the Naga.

Finally, remember that the Naga are race in decline; the Great Sleep is really just a sort of damage-control, attempting to put off what Naga philosophers studying the Akasha see as an inevitable extinction. This fact will color the behavior of any member of this ancient race. A Naga is likely to take extreme measures, readily including death, to protect other Naga, and especially Naga egg-clutches, from discovery or harm. On the other hand, a Naga may not be anywhere near as willing to sacrifice itself for the cause of another race, unless it involves some greater purpose—particularly those that would oppose The Foul. For example, the Naga abandoned the Crab, their friends and allies, to attack the Lying Darkness lurking amid the Dragon Clan. But a Naga would not be likely to similar sacrifice itself for humans involved in a quest for personal gain and glory. This is not to say a Naga will flee such a situation, but it is likely to urge caution, seek alternative approaches and, in the extreme, try its best to protect itself while doing what it can for companions to whom it has made a commitment. The death, after all, of any Naga is a blow to the race and won't be undertaken lightly.

To summarize then—from a general point of view, Naga should be played as somewhat aloof, detached characters, curious about the nature of Rokugan and its inhabitants, as evolved from their origins in the deep history of the world. They are intelligent and cultured, but quite capable—especially in extreme circumstances—of passionate expressions of emotion. In most situations, however they are likely to discreet, even wary, with their willingness to open up dependent on their experience with other races. To other races, they may appear cold and even somewhat arrogant. In the presence of other Naga, they are likely to approach situations with a common understanding, measured against the great background of Naga racial history…but each Naga will respond, in turn, in their own, individual way (this is where the particular players spin on the character will come into play). And no Naga is likely to sacrifice itself lightly; if the circumstances warrant, a Naga won't hesitate to face death. Otherwise, however, a Naga is more likely to withdraw from conflict, or at least engage in a way that minimizes its exposure to danger, preserving itself and its contributions to the Akasha for another day and a greater purpose.

Nezumi

Like the Naga, the Nezumi are the surviving descendants of once-powerful and sophisticated civilization. Unlike the Naga, however, the Nezumi are a degenerate remnant. Most aspects of their culture were lost in the sudden cataclysm that destroyed their greatest city, and the desperate fight for survival in the nascent Shadowlands that followed. As a result, they are, by Rokugani standards, a savage and primitive race, little better than animals. This belies the fact that Nezumi are intelligent and insightful creatures…but their intellect has a cunning edge, tempered by a fierce devotion to preservation of self and race. Like the Naga, a Nezumi will readily die for a cause; however, that cause is even more likely to be confined to those things that would immediately affect Nezumi interests and well-being. So a Nezumi will fight ferociously to protect a warren full of pups, but will probably quickly flee or hide from a random encounter with some wandering threat. In contrast to the Naga, whom humans would likely see as overly cautious, many Nezumi will be viewed as cowardly. Of course, those humans who have close association with Nezumi, such as the Hiruma, will know better.

In some respects, however, the Rokugani have it essentially correct; the Nezumi are a relatively primitive race, at least in comparison to their own, with many animal qualities. Nezumi live in earthen warrens, networks of tunnels burrowed into the ground. They hunt and gather what they eat, generally not cultivating crops or livestock. Like most hunter-gatherers, they are frequently nomadic, readily abandoning a warren if faced with serious threats or shortages of food and seeking somewhere more hospitable to settle. To assist in all of this, they employ a variety of natural attributes—fur for protection from the elements, strong teeth than chew through wood and even stone, sharp claws for digging, keen senses of smell and hearing that helps offset relatively poor eye-sight, and scent-marking using secretions from their bodies that can mark out trails and even communicate simple messages to other Nezumi. Their weapons and tools are unsophisticated, being made of wood (such as the legendary "Sharp-Sharp Stick"), stone and whatever metals they can acquire…and this highlights perhaps their most well-known and, to humans, irritating characteristic—Nezumi are wily, effective and entirely unrepentant scavengers. Given the harsh circumstances of their existence, the concept of personal property is luxury most Nezumi can't afford to acknowledge. They simply take what they need or want, without understanding or particularly caring that a non-Nezumi would probably consider this theft and respond accordingly.

So, a good starting point for a Nezumi character is to consider a cunning, rather furtive creature, not unlike their smaller rodent cousins. Being intelligent and always eager to be aware of their surroundings, they will generally be inquisitive, but wary and constantly alert for danger or threats. Like the Naga, of course, the extent of a particular Nezumi's caution around humans will be related to its familiarity and experience with them. A Nezumi that has spent a great deal of time interacting with humans will be more used to them and their behavior; of course, this could be good or bad, depending on how well those interactions with humans have gone. A Nezumi who has spent a lot of time around the Crab, a Clan typically well-predisposed to ratlings would probably have a very different opinion of humans than one who has encountered the Crane, who consider Nezumi little more than beasts. This will also affect Nezumi behavior; again, a Nezumi familiar with humans is probably more likely to reign in its natural urge to scavenge things that don't belong to it than one that isn't! However, this won't readily apply to Naga. As noted, Nezumi were, at one time, raised by Naga as livestock. This unfortunate truth

is "hard-wired" into Nezumi, who will generally react to the presence of Naga with fear and loathing. Once more, the example of Zamalash shows that both races can rise above these instinctive behaviors…but such familiarity will be neither quick nor easy to achieve and, in any case, Nezumi will probably always remain suspicious of the race that, at one time, considered them food.

Like the Naga, Nezumi use of language presents an excellent opportunity to manifest their nonhuman nature during a roleplaying session. The canon reference materials—particularly fiction—show that Nezumi struggle with Rokugani, generally managing a sort of pidgin dialect that results in awkward phraseologies and frequent duplications of words ("Yes-yes, samurai-man-sama, am good-good at finding food"). Again, familiarity with the use of Rokugani seems to smooth this away somewhat, but never seems to eliminate it. Nezumi also have a distinct sense of time, broadly divided into Yesterday, Today and Tomorrow. Yesterday can literally refer to the day before this one, but can also generally refer to the past; qualifiers like "soon Yesterday" or "long-ago Yesterday" might be used. The concept of "Tomorrow" is more complex. Tomorrow can refer to various points in the future time, but Tomorrow also encompasses the pervasive Nezumi unease over the uncertainty and danger implicit in the future. The destruction of their civilization by the fall of Fu Leng, and the great hardships that followed for the survivors, stamped itself on Nezumi collective psychology in a very profound way. As a result, "Tomorrow" also encompasses concepts such as destiny and death. A Nezumi speaking about a close brush with death might say, "I was racing Tomorrow during the fight-fight." Such idiosyncrasies in speech will definitely bring color and distinction to a Nezumi character.

There are a few final points to consider. Nezumi, aside from the small minority known as Rememberers, have very poor long-term memories. In the absence of a Rememberer, or some other measure to assist it in retaining and recalling memories, a Nezumi is likely to forget anything that isn't instinctive or a learned skill. So, a Nezumi character who separates from its party of player characters for more than a few days probably won't remember those other characters or its experiences with them. There can be ways of mitigating this, but it will take some effort on the part of the Nezumi's companions. Among Nezumi, memory is enhanced through use of other senses, particularly smell; Rememberers craft Memory Sticks for this purpose, scented with particular combinations of pheromones that can actually encode messages and impart skills and abilities. Nezumi can also leave scent-markings in their environment as a similar form of communication. Gamemasters and players may not wish to dwell too much on exactly how a Nezumi secretes pheromones onto things to leave messages (that's up to them), but the use of scent-markings, and obvious use of smell and hearing in preference to sight are among the "animal" ways to heighten the experience of roleplaying a Nezumi.

To summarize then—from a general point of view, Nezumi should be played as furtive, cunning creatures, as curious as Naga about Rokugan and its denizens, but much warier. They are intelligent, but their intelligence is constrained somewhat by a limited ability to remember events, a deeply-rooted concern, bordering on fear, about the future, and particularly animal nature. They typically have little regard for concepts such as ownership of material property, and will likely do whatever seems expedient in the circumstances to benefit their pack, their Tribe and themselves. To an even greater degree than Naga, Nezumi are unlikely to sacrifice themselves without a truly compelling reason (such as a threat to their pack or pups), and will be quick to turn and hide or flee from danger. Again, of course, individual character history and experience, as well as specific Tribe and School, will influence this general approach to playing a Nezumi character.

Shapeshifters

What probably distinguishes Shapeshifters most from the other major nonhumans, Naga and Nezumi, is just how undistinguished they can be. As noted previously, Shapeshifters have two distinct shapes—a Human form, and an animal form that reflects their essential spirit nature. Either form, in itself, typically isn't all that remarkable. For example, an Inu, or dog-spirit, looks like a dog in its natural form and could pass as such. Similarly, in its Human form, it is just a person (perhaps, if a player desires, with some slightly "doggy" features such as shaggy hair, or large and somewhat sharp teeth.) A Gamemaster may wish to have spirits exhibit distinctive characteristics. For example, in Rokugan, spirits of dead humans who have returned to Ningen-do possess an otherworldly, golden glow, while in Japanese folk-

lore, Kitsune or fox-spirits often possess multiple tails. However, one of the most intriguing aspects of playing a Shapeshifter character is the idea of Shapeshifting spirits walking among the people of Rokugan, so the more evident a Shapeshifter is made, the harder it will be for it to blend in among humans. Gamemasters should consider this carefully, and take particular note of the Spirit Taboos listed in the Creatures of Rokugan supplement; many of these already make it difficult to completely hide a character's spirit nature. Ultimately, Gamemasters should, together with their players, do whatever best suits the campaign and the party in question. Remember that Shapeshifters, unlike the Nezumi or Naga and as befits their nature, generally play a peripheral and quite enigmatic role in Rokugan, so there really are no hard and fast rules governing their exact nature. This leaves Gamemasters and players with quite a bit of room to explore and improvise when it comes to Shapeshifters!

What should be kept in mind by a player with a Shapeshifter character is that its nonhuman nature is best expressed through its behavior. As already mentioned, Shapeshifters tend to behave as somewhat exaggerated or "idealized" versions of the creature they represent. Therefore, Inu (dog spirits) are generally loyal and protective; Bakeneko (cat spirits) are curious, playful and often mischievous; Tanuki (badger spirits) are elusive and temperamental; Tsuru (crane spirits) tend to be aloof and vain. This is not to suggest that Shapeshifters are slaves to their natures. For example, an Inu is not necessarily unquestioningly loyal to whoever happens to cross its path. A player needs to allow the essential nature of the Shapeshifter creature to color behavior that is, otherwise, typically Human. Spirits are, after all, intelligent beings. So, an Inu will probably be as wary of strangers as anyone else but, once having formed a relationship with another, will tend to be loyal and trustworthy regarding that individual. Needless to say, Inu make good companions and reliable party members. Bakeneko, on the other hand….

As always, the caveat that applies is that each character is an individual, with a particular background and set of experiences. In the case of a Shapeshifter character, the player and Gamemaster will have to agree on what past experience the character has with Ningen-do (if any) and its particular reasons for entering the mortal realm. In this respect, Shapeshifters are more like Naga, as it is possible for either sort of character to enter the game never before having encountered a human being. This will make a Naga character just that much more alien. For a Shapeshifter character, the impact is more insidious, as it may be able to readily assume Human shape, but know nothing whatsoever about Human behavior, society, culture and so on. Such a character will certainly not be able to easily fit in among humans, and will probably appear insane. Both players and Gamemasters may find it easier to assume a Shapeshifter character has previous experience with humans, having spent time in Ningen-do and knowing at least something of the mortal realm.

The other point this raises regards the particular reason for a Shapeshifter character being in Ningen-do in the first place. Unlike the Naga or the Nezumi, who are native to the mortal realm, Shapeshifters must cross between realms to get there. This could come about for many reasons, all of which are likely to have a major impact on the character's motivations. For instance, did the Shapeshifter travel to Ningen-do willingly? If so, for what purpose? Is it simply seeking to learn more about the mortal realm, or does it have a specific quest? And if it didn't enter Ningen-do willingly, then what happened? Did it cross the realms accidentally, and now seeks a way to return? Was it summoned in some fashion, and if so, why? Or was it sent, or even banished to the mortal realm? It should be apparent that answering these questions can, by themselves, provide powerful motivations for a Shapeshifter character.

Finally, remember there is fitting in…and then there is "fitting in". A Shapeshifter character may be quite familiar with Rokugan and its people, culture and customs, and it may be in the Empire quite willingly, anxious to blend in among the people. None of this is going to make a Shapeshifter a samurai, with Clan, Family, position and history. Generally, a Shapeshifter in the mortal realm that assumes Human form will likely only be able to pass as a commoner or, at best, a ronin. Certainly, there are unique circumstances that could allow a Shapeshifter to achieve a higher station in Rokugani society, but that would be entirely up to a Gamemaster and the peculiarities of his campaign.

Nonhuman Characters and the Campaign

We've finally reached the point at which our Gamemaster has settled on allowing nonhuman characters into his campaign. Everyone is on-board, understanding how nonhuman characters work mechanically, how they are likely to relate to other characters and NPCs, and how best to play them. All that remains is some reasonable rationale to explain why these nonhumans are in the game, playing as part of party that probably includes a majority of humans, most of whom are likely samurai. This is really just a variation on the time-honored RPG question…what brought this group of characters together in the first place? The difficulty, of course, is that in other roleplaying games, the presence of humanoid snakes and rats and otherworldly spirits is no big deal; you could find them sitting in the proverbial inn, waiting to undertake an adventure, as readily as any other sort of character. As we've seen, however, this is not the case in Rokugan (of course, if a Gamemaster chooses to use a non-canon setting, such as an alternate or future version of Rokugan, then can do much as he chooses.) Assuming that the campaign will generally conform to the canon setting then, depending on the time-setting of a campaign, integrating nonhumans can range from somewhat troublesome to extremely problematic. Several Challenge-Focus-Strike scenarios are given below to offer some ideas, but first, some general thoughts on the involvement of nonhumans in a new or existing Legend of the Five Rings roleplaying campaign.

It is easiest to consider Shapeshifters first, this time. Spirits are timeless; that is, there is no particular reason to believe that the Spirit Realms or their denizens have changed in any significant way since the creation of the world. Accordingly, a Shapeshifter introduced in a campaign set in the "Dawn of the Empire" period would behave and be played much the same as one introduced in a campaign set in "contemporary" Rokugan; what will be different, of course, is the campaign environment in which the Shapeshifter will be played. As a result, introducing Shapeshifter characters is relatively easy. They literally can "show up at the inn", in their Human form, and (assuming they don't draw particular attention to their Shapeshifter nature somehow) be treated much the same as any other commoner or ronin character. A Gamemaster and player may even want to conceal the Shapeshifter nature of the character from the rest of the party, allowing it become suspected or known over time, or when circumstances cause it, and then role-play through the suspicions or revelation. Each character will react in a different way, depending on the player and his or her vision for that character. For example, a Kitsu Sodan-Senzo, well acquainted with the nature of the Spirit Realms overlapping Ningen-do, will probably respond favorably or at least with an open mind. On the other hand, a Toritaka bushi devoted to hunting and destroying ghosts and spirits in Ningen-do probably won't. At this point, we leave it in the hands of the Gamemaster and his players, only taking a final opportunity to urge the Shapeshifter character player to do his or her best to continue roleplaying the enigmatic and otherworldly nature of their creation.

When it comes to Naga and Nezumi, things are more complex. Both races have well-delineated histories, described in the Creatures of Rokugan supplement. Accordingly, the standing of each Race will, in a canon setting, be quite dependent on the time-setting of the campaign. This has been touched on previously with respect to Rokugani attitudes towards the respective nonhumans. More broadly, the time-period will determine how easy it is to incorporate either of these nonhuman races in the first place. The "golden age" for inclusion of Naga and Nezumi is the period surrounding and following the Clan Wars, approximately 1125 to 1150 on the Isawa calendar for Naga, and to 1170 for Nezumi. During these times, the Naga had left the Great Sleep and become enmeshed in ongoing conflicts in Rokugan against the Shadowlands and the Lying Darkness, before returning to their racial slumber once more. At the same time, the Nezumi had progressively engaged in ever more interactions with humans, before leaving Rokugan almost to a creature in the battle against Tomorrow. It is relatively easy, therefore, to include members of either race in a campaign set during this period. Before about 1125, both races had less interaction with humans—considerably less in the case of Naga who, except for a few watchful scouts, were locked in the Great Sleep. None of this precludes using the nonhumans, of course. It simply means that, in order to remain believable (in a canon sense); both Gamemaster and player will have to work harder to accommodate their rarity and the mutual lack of familiarity and understanding between them and most Rokugani.

Of course, there is another alternative—the all-Nonhuman party. Imagine a party consisting entirely of Naga, or Nezumi, traveling through and encountering adventures in Rokugan. The most obvious and immediate benefit of this is it can, potentially, make accounting for the party's formation and purpose much easier. A party of Naga could be a delegation sent out from a hidden city to make contact with humans, perhaps to undertake improved relations or deliver an important message. A party of Nezumi could be formed by a tribe for the purpose of finding out what has happened to another tribe, with whom contact has been lost. A group of Shapeshifters could have banded together to find a portal back to their home realm. In each case, the party could be faced with traveling through the lands of one or more Clans, encountering humans (and perhaps other Nonhumans) who come to help or hinder them. Such a group of adventurers could avoid the problems and pitfalls associated with trying to maintain good relations within a party that contains, say, an idealistic Matsu bushi, an arrogant Kakita artisan and a light-fingered Nezumi scavenger. On the other hand, be wary of simply introducing brand-new problems. A party consisting of a mix of Naga and Nezumi will be hard-pressed to remain together without some very specific rationale, given the intrinsic feelings between two races, one of which considers the other edible. This isn't to say it should be attempted; indeed, such a situation could be quite entertaining. However, the Gamemaster and players should remain mindful of

the basic nature of the creatures involved and do their best to ensure that they incorporate the essential motivations of each type of Nonhuman, without bogging the game down to the point of becoming unplayable.

Some Specific Situations

During the course of any roleplaying game, player characters generally prove to be very good at getting themselves into situations that the Gamemaster has not at all foreseen. This is, of course, part of the charm of roleplaying games and a major part of the fun for the Gamemaster. However, it also makes any attempt to codify and discuss every possible situation facing an adventure party a fool's game. Accordingly, the following sections highlight only a few of the most obvious issues that could end up facing an adventure party, which carry specific implications for Nonhuman player characters. The intent is to offer Gamemasters and players some ideas about how to approach resolving predicaments in which their characters, both Human and Nonhuman, find themselves.

First Situation

A player is playing a Nezumi scavenger. While passing through a town in the Crane lands, she decides that her character just can't resist a set of beautiful porcelain hairpins displayed in a merchant's stall. Her character is naturally stealthy...but her skills have been honed in the wilds of Rokugan, not a bustling human marketplace. The Gamemaster considers the Nezumi's unfamiliarity with the environment, along with the fact that merchants, already wary of thieves, are going to be doubly wary about having a creature with a reputation for stealing mucking around their stalls. He assigns a suitably difficult TN to the Nezumi's use of the Stealth Skill to avoid being caught stealing the hairpins; the Nezumi player rolls the dice and fails. She is caught, red-handed, trying to steal the merchant's wares.

Two questions arise—what will the Nezumi do, and what will happen if he gets caught and taken into custody?

The first question is relatively easy to answer. Like a Human thief, the Nezumi's first action will, in all likelihood, be to escape. However, there is a possibility that a Human, depending on his or her situation and the circumstances of the market, will simply surrender to the authorities. This almost certainly isn't true for a Nezumi. As noted, Nezumi have a finely-honed sense of self-preservation, so not only will he probably recognize that what he has attempted is a crime among humans, she will also know instinctively that her duty, now, is to run away, in order to help preserve the tribe. And her instinct would be sound, because the answer to the second question is also easy—not being what humans would view as a "person" in the context of The Celestial Order, a Nezumi is unlikely to receive any protection under Rokugani law. She is, technically, even less than an eta—and an eta is little more than property. Any Rokugani could simply kill her outright, and be fully justified in doing so; moreover, in the Crane lands, even a Magistrate would be unlike to bother trying to take the Nezumi into custody and would simply kill her in the manner of destroying vermin. Or course, it is here that the Gamemaster must begin to insert some judgment. If the town was in Crab lands, then the Nezumi may be treated more mercifully, because the Crab are more aware, and likely to be forgiving of Nezumi behavior. In such a case, one could imagine the Nezumi being caught and escorted off of Crab lands, with the understanding that future transgressions will be dealt with more severely. On the other hand, if the town was a holding of the Unicorn, then the Nezumi's life would probably be in danger the moment she appeared in the marketplace. And more general circumstances could play a role; what if the Nezumi was a member of a formal delegation attending court at a nearby Crane castle?

Second Situation

A player is playing a Naga jakla (shugenja). While attending court at Kyuden Bayushi in the Scorpion lands as part of a Naga delegation, the player sees an opportunity to employ Pearl Magic to gain an advantage over other court attendees. However, the player decides that while he is going to do so away from the main court activities, his character would make no particular effort to hide what he is doing. He is seen practicing his (to a Rokugani) peculiar magic and word quickly spreads. The Gamemaster decides that, given the circumstances, the Scorpion Clan Champion himself will summon the entire Naga delegation and demand an explanation. Not only is the use of supernatural powers (particularly strange, Nonhuman ones) potentially dangerous, it is disrespectful to employ them in home to which one has been invited and may even insinuate that the host is incapable of seeing to the needs of his guests.

The key to this situation is to what extent the Naga would reasonably understand the protocols of a Human court. In fact, the Naga are an intelligent and sophisticated race, and would be likely to have spent considerable time studying and educating themselves about Rokugani politics. Accordingly, the Gamemaster could actually have taken the opportunity to insert himself into the player's actions in a perfectly reasonable way. Remember that the Naga are linked by the group consciousness called the Akasha. While this is not, actually, a shared mind, it does serve as a well-spring of inspiration and memory for Naga. As the player was contemplating his magical undertaking, the Gamemaster could reasonably have offered an impression, originating from and through the other Naga and the Akasha generally, of a sense of misgiving and discomfort about this action to the player. However, remember that Naga prize individualism—an important attribute when one's mind is part of a collective consciousness—so nothing would have prevented the player from proceeding anyway. This brings him to the current situation, facing an offended Scorpion Clan Champion. In such a situation, the Naga, a generally honorable race, are likely to offer apologies and whatever restitution will satisfy the Scorpion Champion. Of course, the Gamemaster may, at this point, want to remember that the Scorpion tend to be quick to exploit such opportunities. Accordingly, whatever restitution is demanded by the Champion is likely to be as favorable as possible

to the Clan and will particularly be intended to obtain as much leverage as possible from what may be viewed as guileless outsiders. For example, he may decide to have the Champion appear magnanimous and simply honor-bind the offending Naga to a future favor to the Scorpion. This leaves the player in what would normally be one of the most uncomfortable places in Rokugan—owing the Scorpion Clan a debt. But it also lets the player explore just how an extraordinarily long-lived creature like a Naga would interpret such a transient thing as a debt and what effect his overriding racial imperative—the survival of the Naga, in order to ensure they are able to fight against The Foul in future ages—would have when it comes time to discharge this favor to the Scorpion.

Third Situation

A player is playing a Shapeshifter—specifically, a Bakeneko or cat-spirit who originates from Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief. However, the player arranged with the Gamemaster to generate a character that appears to be a bushi of the Hare Clan, hoping to conceal his true identity from his party companions for as long as possible. So far, he has been successful; his occasional private periods with the Gamemaster (during which he pursues small side adventures in his natural cat-form) have made the rest of the party suspicious, but none yet suspect his true nature. However, while investigating an apparent murder in a village located in the Phoenix Lands, the player lets his own mischievous nature get the better of him and he is observed changing from one form to another by a Phoenix NPC. Word quickly spreads through the village about the presence of a Shapeshifting spirit. The rumor comes to the ears of one of the other player characters, a Scorpion bushi.

This scenario highlights one of the key issues facing a character playing a Shapeshifter and, by extension, the other players and the Gamemaster—the extent to which the character's true nature is known. In the above case, the Gamemaster and the player "conspired" to conceal the character's spirit nature from the rest of the party. This definitely adds another dimension to game play, at the cost of requiring more time away from the rest of the party (which could get annoying for the other players if this happens frequently during regular play sessions). In theory, a Shapeshifter could get away with this indefinitely. It's likely, however, that the character's true nature will eventually be discovered by somebody—it will happen accidentally, the character will get careless, or he will run afoul of someone or something that is sensitive to the presence of Shapeshifters (such as certain other Shapeshifters). In this example, the Shapeshifter has to contend with his discovery by the Phoenix NPC. This will depend on how the Gamemaster chooses to handle this situation; a Phoenix character may be less surprised or distressed by the discovery and, instead, more curious and interested in learning more about this wandering spirit. Once more, had this occurred in a different setting, the reaction to the discovery of the Shapeshifter may be somewhat different. The player also has to deal with the word spreading through the village about his character and, finally, with the reaction from the Scorpion bushi. Will the Shapeshifter try to maintain his cover, and to what lengths will he go to do so? Can the Scorpion be persuaded to keep his silence, and at what cost? Or will the Shapeshifter be content to allow his true nature to become known? In this case, the other player characters will each have their own take on this, and the party will collectively need to decide how to deal with this strange, new fact. A Bakeneko Shapeshifter could offer the party many advantages...as long as the mischievous creature can keep its impulses in check!

Ideas for Nonhuman Adventures

So far, we've discussed the integration of Nonhumans into a campaign in broad and general terms—the overall "how" of introducing Nonhumans in the smoothest possible way. You will find several Challenge-Focus-Strike (CFS) scenarios, in the Inn section of Musha Shugyo, that can be used as-is, as the kernel for stand-alone adventures, can themselves be introduced into an existing Legend of the Five Rings campaign, or simply serve as creative inspiration.

Soshi Ukyo

Quick-Starting a Game: Insta-party and CFS

In this installment of "Quick-starting a game," I'm giving you a twist. Almost the complete and polar opposite of what most Gamemasters would encounter. Rather than having to find a way to integrate a Nonhuman PC into your human group, you have to find a way to integrate a human PC into your Nonhuman group. The Nezumi I think are both the most loved and the most loathed race of Rokugan. I hope to help you see the intricacies of the Nezumi and help you find the warm and fuzzy feeling for our rat friends with this issue's "Insta-party."

Characters

Tk'chrr'chk (Blue Fur Tribe)

School/Rank: Scout 3

Air: 4	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 2
			Perception: 4	
Name: 2.5		**Niche: 3.0**		

Skills: Athletics 3, Defense 3, Hunting (Tracking) 5, Lore: Shadowlands 5, Stealth (Sneaking) 5, Jiujutsu 2, Kyujutsu (Nezumi Bow) 3
Advantages: Allies (Hiruma Katsu 2/2), Way of the Land (Hiruma Lands), Languages: Rokugani, Advanced Pheromones

This scout is tall for a Nezumi, standing nearly chest high compared to the above average Crab bushi, and his frame is thin and agile. His brown mottled fur helps him to blend in nearly any surroundings. He wears enough clothing to not make the humans uncomfortable but not so much as to interfere with his movements. He carries little and prefers to rely on his reactions and his brain to get him out of bad spots. Luckily, Tk'chrr'chk is a likeable rat and has made many friends over the years with his easy demeanor. This has become a very lucky thing indeed now that Hiruma Katsu has called upon him for help.

Roleplaying: Easy going. That's the best way to describe Tk'chrr'chk. He is kind and friendly to everyone, always. He has a connection to each person in the party and pulls them all toward their goal. Until Hiruma Katsu's brother is found, he will ride them to the edge of their abilities.

Z'tk'chee (Crippled Bone Tribe)

School/Rank: Warrior 3

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
		Agility: 3		
Name: 3.0		**Niche: 2.0**		

Skills: Athletics 5, Defense 5, Hunting 2, Jiujutsu 3, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Stealth 3, Heavy Weapons (Tooth Club) 5
Advantages: Soft Bones, Quick, Warrior's Stick (Heavy Weapons)

Z'tk'chee is the nezumi version of a hero, a sort of Tribe Champion. He is well groomed, and models himself after the bushi of Rokugan. His armor is clean and well kept even if it is cobbled together from bits and pieces picked up from various places. His gray fur, many scars, and gruff demeanor reminds everyone that Z'tk'chee is no newborn pup. He is a seasoned fighter who fights with skill and cunning rather than brute force. This noble warrior has joined the quest at the request of his friend Tk'chrr'chk and hopes to increase his Name along the way.

Roleplaying: Z'tk'chee is the cranky old man of the bunch; he is opinionated and has no problem sharing his opinions. Of all the group's members he only has real respect for Tk'chrr'chk. They are friends from a handful of previous adventures. To this warrior, berserkers are wild animals and should be caged rather than cultivated.

Tppu'ch'krr (Crippled Bone)

School/Rank: Berserker 3

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 4	Void: 2
		Agility: 4		
Name: 1		**Niche: 1.0**		

Skills: Athletics 2, Deceit (Intimidation) 3, Hunting 2, Jiujutsu (Mochatchikkan) 6, Lore: Shadowlands 2, Heavy Weapons (Stone Ax) 5, Defense 3
Advantages: Strength of the Earth (3 ranks), Berserker's Stick (Jiujutsu)
Disadvantages: Lost Tail

Tppu'ch'krr has wild eyes set deep back into his skull, and they are always darting back and forth. His actions and his mind are completely unpredictable and a cloud of rage is just under the surface. When that anger takes over, Tppu'ch'krr becomes a death dealer. He speaks little and is just on the edge of trust with all but Tk'chrr'chk. He has brown fur that is matted, torn, and dirty, and covered by mere rags. The scars and missing tail are trophies of his many victories in battle.

Roleplaying: Think back to the time when you were the angriest at someone or something. How even your vision was tinged by a red haze and nothing mattered but your anger. Imagine that feeling all day long, every

single day of your life, that is Tppu'ch'krr. Most of the time you sit in silence, but occasionally sparks of anger will flare into life as a shouted tirade that can last for several moments before you can calm yourself down. Just remember that you are here to kill, that's what you do and that's what you are. Nothing else matters.

Te'chu'trk (Third Whisker Tribe)

School/Rank: Shaman 3

Air: 3	Earth: 3	Fire: 3	Water: 3	Void: 3
Awareness: 4		Intelligence: 4		
Name: 4.0		**Niche: 3.0**		

Skills: Defense 5, Hunting 3, Lore: Naming Magic 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Spellcraft (Name Magic) 5, Performance: Dance 5
Advantages: Great Name, Wisdom Stick
Spells: Bend Name, Conjure Earth's Bounty, Mend Name, Smite the Nameless, Bonds of Blood, Share Cunning, Fracture Name, Conjure Chitatchikkan's Fury

If the Nezumi know anything of vanity they have learned it from Te'chu'trk. His ego knows no bounds. You have only to ask him who the greatest shaman among the tribes is, and he will tell you that it is of course himself. He preens like a proud peacock, and holds himself high above the other ratlings in his group, preferring to interact only with Tk'chrr'chk. His fur is thick, black, and luxurious.

Roleplaying: Constantly refer to yourself in the third person ("Te'chu'trk is bored of this." "Te'chu'trk thinks that is a bad idea." etc.), because all truly vain people do this. He is always smoothing his fur, trimming errant hairs or polishing his claws. And when anyone pauses for a minute, that's the perfect time to tell them how great you are, right?

Hiruma Katsu

School/Rank: Hiruma Scout 2/Falcon's Strike

Air: 2	Earth: 3	Fire: 2	Water: 4	Void: 4
Reflexes: 4	Stamina: 4			
Honor: 2.0		**Glory: 2.3**		**Status: 2.5**

Skills: Athletics (Running) 5, Defense 3, Hunting 3, Lore: Shadowlands 3, Stealth (Sneaking) 5, Kyujutsu (Yumi) 5
Advantages: Allies (Tk'chrr'chk 2/2), Fleet (6 pts), Kharmic Tie (2pts, Hiruma Tatsune)
Disadvantages: Dark Fate, Haunted (2 pts), Unlucky (3 pts)

Hiruma Katsu is a respected member of the Crab armies who just happens to be related to a lost cause. His brother, Hiruma Tatsune, is also a scout but is not very good at what he does. He is never sent out on long range missions, but sometimes strays further than he should. Katsu is always sent after his brother when he doesn't come home on time and usually finds him without too much trouble. This time, however, Katsu has found no clues as to his brother's whereabouts. Katsu is of medium build not quite as tall as most large Crab bushi but taller than a standard Rokugani. He has powerful chest muscles from years of training with the yumi, and has the lithe frame of a runner. His face is clean shaven and his long black hair is tightly braided.

Roleplaying: Katsu is confident in his abilities and the abilities of his ratling comrades, but the worry for his lost brother is almost crippling to him. He will do just about anything to find his brother and bring him home alive, because to do any less is to lose a part of himself.

Challenge Focus Strike

Challenge

Hiruma Katsu has called upon his close friend and ally Tk'chrr'chk to put together a group of Nezumi, capable of foraging deep into the Shadowlands, if required, to find his lost brother. He is providing as much supplies as he can and offering his undying devotion.

Focus

The only clue that Katsu has as to the location of his brother is a dropped finger of jade. Katsu found it while following his brother's trail, but the track disappeared just a little further. He is now hoping that the Nezumi can return to that spot and sniff out the location of Tatsune. The scent will lead them back to the Ancestral Home of the Hiruma. (Pre- or post-recovery by the Crab Clan, your choice.)

Strike

Pre-recovery: The group finds Tatsune fairly easily in the ruins of the Hiruma castle, since he is not hiding nor is he kidnapped, with a small band of Lost samurai. He has become Lost himself, and will try to sway his brother over to the power of Jigoku. What will Katsu do?

Post-recovery: The group finds Tatsune near the Hiruma castle with a small band of samurai, some clearly Tainted. They are waiting to ambush an important resupply convoy heading to the castle. Katsu will have to neutralize the threat, but will he expose his brother's corruption by alerting the castle, or will he try to handle it quietly?

Akodo Harubi

Down the Rabbit Hole

The girl ran.

The forest blurred past her, thick and dark green, fading to gray and black in the twilit distance. Her arms flailed at branches that whipped and snapped at her face; her bare feet pounded through and over and around stumps and deadfall that scraped her skin raw. She wanted, so desperately, to stop. To just stop and catch her breath... to rest. Even for a moment, just to rest….

But to stop was to allow the thing pursuing her to gain. So she ran. Each breath burned like liquid fire and her heart pounded like a hammer against her ribs, but she ran.

Water. She splashed into it and it sloshed like ice around her ankles, her knees, her hips. Her feet sank into cold mud but she forced herself on, reaching for the trees lining the far side of the pond. Her fingers touched branches, then her right foot dropped into a hole and she pitched forward. Dark water engulfed her in a thick, roaring silence. She thrashed about, jamming her hands into the soft muck, desperately seeking leverage to regain her footing. One hand finally found a submerged root and she shoved her head back above the surface. She sucked in air, yanked her foot free and lunged forward again.

But she'd lost time. Too much time.

Something crashed through the trees behind her. The girl gasped and clutched at the trees, scrabbling forward on all fours. Another crash, louder. Snapping branches. A scream—her own. Then the trees wrenched apart and something erupted from them, filling the space behind her with blackness, malevolent hunger, and a cold stink like wet, dead skin. She shrank, crushed by terror and despair, becoming nothing.

A flare of golden light.

It streaked like a meteor out of the forest to her left, slamming into the darkness, driving it aside. Another scream, but this time it wasn't hers; it was something raw and primal, the cry of a massive, maddened beast. Gold and blackness blurred, whirling into trees that cracked and splintered. The great cry sounded again. Another rose in awful counterpoint, a rising, hissing shriek jagged with fury and malice. The girl scrambled backwards, heaving herself out of the water, gasping and half-blind with mud and fear. She started to turn, to launch herself back into wild flight, when the screams behind her rose to a deafening crescendo. Another crash, louder than the rest, then a long, bubbling wail, suddenly cut off.

Silence.

In spite of herself, the girl looked back over her shoulder.

A massive, golden figure crouched in the pool, tense and wary, watching something that thrashed about in the muddy water, and then went still. Before the water closed over it, the girl caught of glimpse of what it was. She whimpered and looked away.

She heard a soft splashing sound, then she felt something looming over her. She looked up and found herself gazing into eyes like burnished copper. They flanked a huge, flat muzzle and were framed, in turn, by a thick mane of golden-red hair. Great lips pulled back, exposing teeth as long as her fingers. That alone should have terrified her, she knew, but it didn't. The eyes pushed away the fear and darkness and held her focus. They were…deep. Like tunnels. Deep tunnels, to vast and distant places. The girl saw so many things in that briefest instant…she saw other worlds, some cold and empty, some brimming with potential. She saw possibilities.

She saw wisdom, as varied and ancient as the stars in the night sky.

Then the lips moved, shaping themselves around sounds that might have been words, but to the girl sounded like the mutter and growl of a pensive beast. She stared and blinked. The massive head tilted slightly, a strangely human gesture, and the copper eyes narrowed. The creature spoke again, and it was the same animal noises, but what sounded in the girl's ears was a deep voice, like muted thunder.

"Are you badly hurt?"

The girl kept staring, but there was a power in that voice that wouldn't be denied. She shook her head, and the movement seemed to free something inside her. She'd meant to say, No, I'm not badly hurt, but instead, she just crumpled up and cried.

The creature simply waited until her wracking sobs subsided. Then a huge paw, larger than her head, reached down and gently tilted her face upwards.

"You don't belong here," the thunder-voice said. The girl wasn't sure if it was a statement or a question, so she shook her head.

"No. I…I don't." She sniffed and wiped at her face, but it just further smeared the mud and tears and blood. "Who…who are you?"

"I am Nintai." The creature sank down to a crouch. It still towered over her. "And you are lost."

"I think…yes. I am." She looked at the dark water. "You…saved me from…." Her voice dropped to a whisper. "What was that?"

The creature shook its head. "It does not matter. But it is not the only danger in this forest. So, now we must return you to your home."

The girl looked around at the forest, now shrouded in gloom. She brought her eyes back to the comforting golden glow of Nintai. "I don't know how…to get home." She swallowed tears. "I don't even know where I am."

"But I do," Nintai said, standing and reaching out a huge paw. "And I know that your home is not far from here."

The girl looked at the offered paw…at claws that, even retracted, were like keen, black knives. She lifted her hand…hesitated. But the red-gold eyes held nothing but an honest compassion, so she placed her hand against the warm pads.

"Oh," she said suddenly, her eyes lighting on torn patches of fur, some soaked with reddish-gold blood. "You're hurt."

Nintai's paw closed around her hand. "I have suffered much worse," he said, in a way that suggested the words meant far more than just that. She opened her mouth to ask a question, but Nintai was drawing her toward the darkness beneath the trees.

She stopped, shaking her head. "No. Please. I don't want to go that way."

Nintai bared his fangs, but his eyes told her it was a smile. "Nor shall you," he said, then pulled, gently, but irresistibly. She took another reluctant step, closer to the trees—

Nothing.

—then another, but the forest was....

Gone.

And now they stood…nowhere.

Just a diffuse blankness, devoid of shape, of substance, even of color. Her eyes tried to see it as gray, but it wasn't. There was just…no color at all. Yet, it wasn't empty. It seemed to hold the same sense of potential, of myriad possibilities, that she had seen in Nintai's eyes. It was as though many things were just out of sight, waiting to be seen.

She looked up at Nintai, still holding her hand. He, at least, was still a rich golden color; perhaps even more so. A soft golden light seemed to surround him…except it wasn't a light. It was as though his fur blurred into the surroundings, rendering him slightly insubstantial…part of the blankness around them, or drawn from it, or….

She blinked and shook her head. "Where are we?"

"Close to your home."

She frowned. Nothing had changed, and yet there *was* something familiar about their surroundings, now. A feeling of…completion? Arrival?

The girl looked back at Nintai. The torn patches of fur were gone, leaving him whole and…beautiful. Then she looked down at herself and realized she was unharmed, too. It was as though the horror of the forest had never happened. Already, it was a detached memory, like a story she had read or someone had told her. Or like a....

"Am I dreaming?" she asked.

Nintai bared his fangs again. "Perhaps. Or perhaps I am the dreamer, and you are the dream."

She considered that, then said, "No…I don't think so. I think I'm the one dreaming."

Nintai laughed at that, a deep, booming sound. The girl couldn't help but smile at the vast humor lying behind the laughter.

"Now," Nintai said, "it is time for you to return home."

She frowned, suddenly reluctant to leave this moment. "But…I'd like to stay with you," she said. "At least for a while."

At that, Nintai became serious. "No. To be somewhere you are not supposed to be is a very dangerous thing." A brief hardness flashed through his eyes. "It can change you, in ways you should not be changed."

The girl shook her head. "I don't understand."

Nintai looked at her for a moment, and nodded. "That is good," he said, then let go of her hand. Possibility crystallized into a sudden, hard certainty. Nintai watched as it surrounded the girl, and then she was gone.

Nintai paused at the forest pool, noting that the oni carcass was already gone. A black slick of wrongness coated the water, but the Shinomen Mori had an immense capacity to absorb and dilute darkness. In a few days, he would check again, but he expected the pool would have recovered by then.

So would the girl, he thought, remembering his brief glimpse of her world. Certainly not the strangest realm he'd seen, but still...it had been so *different*. A place full of smoke and strange energies, of simple farms and steel towers, of wonderful machines that rolled and swam and flew. Even without his returning her there through Yume-do, her ordeal in the Shinomen would have been so utterly foreign as to quickly become something distant, something unreal. Filtered through the Realm of Dreams, it should remain with her as nothing more than vague echoes of nightmare…troubling, but soon mostly forgotten. Of course, as for how she had come to be here in the first place….

Nintai shrugged away the thought. Even the Kitsu, for all their lore, had never come to completely understand the peculiar workings of the Realms.

Overhead, the Moon rose, turning the forest steel grey and obsidian black. Nintai examined his wounds, decided that none needed immediate care, then turned and started back towards Te'tik'kir's Shrine.

Towards home.

Soshi Ukyo

Shard of Crystal

Winter

A single bird sang, perched atop the bald, leafless cherry tree overlooking the valley.

The samurai trudged through the sludge, the remainder of the past week's heavy snowfall, hearing the little bird's song but not listening to it, sunken deeply in contemplation. He would rather have stayed at the small outpost which was his station for this winter, but his master had demanded his presence at the Kyuden and so he responded to the call - leaving behind the samurai-ko he loved and the men he called his friends. There were matters of feelings and of the heart, and then there were matters of duty and loyalty; and it was clear which took precedence - that was how he had been raised, that was how he lived.

The sludge became deeper and ever harder to traverse, and the pack on his back heavier with each mile. The missive urged him to make haste, and at this pace he would never make it to the Kyuden before the evening - let alone before the next snowstorm came. Clouds moved overhead carrying the promise of more snow as the samurai climbed the valley's west bank and went into the dubious cover of the Hayaku forest covering the ground between the Drunken Tower and his master's Kyuden. He did not know this ground, but at least it was possible to traverse it at a reasonable speed. He was samurai - he could not fail as long as he served his master.

She walked through the forest of Forever Snow, proceeding as if her bare feet glided over the permafrost that gave those lands their name. She knew where she was supposed to be, and knew it would be soon. Oak and Elm met each other where she stepped, and seeing those trees, recognizing them for what they were and signified and would be again, she halted.

"This is where they used to come," her sister said – her eldest sister who had been in the shelter of the oak tree, had *always* been there. "I remember … I remember".

"This is where they will come again," Shourai replied, moving to stand beneath the Elm tree.

"One already approaches", said the third one, the middle sister, coming down the path Shourai had just vacated and making for the spot in between Oak and Elm. "Not far now, and ever coming closer. Soon he will be here."

For hours he marched through the forest. The snowstorm he had felt approaching broke, and all too swiftly the protection of the trees had been withdrawn. A lesser man would have lost the way or might have sat down and given up, but the samurai was of a different stature, a different time. The man who held his oath of fealty was a great man, and the man who held *his* oath was an even greater one, all the way to the Emperor. He was a small spoke in the big wheel of the Empire, and would not snap when all the weight of Rokugan was lowered on his back, when he was at the bottom of the wheel.

A sudden rustling sound caught his wayward, inward attention, and the samurai looked to its source, only to stare in the eyes of a startled and sleepy rabbit, cold and hungry and devastated in the all-white woodland. It blinked once at the samurai, as if unsure of what to do about this intruder, before scurrying off. The samurai noticed the half-drawn blade in his hand and resheathed it; brushed off the snow that had packed on his shoulders during the short time he had stood here, and marched on.

More time passed. What could have been a short trip through the woodlands to the Kyuden - as the bird flies - had become a Calvary as the snow impeded more and more the samurai's speed and route. Time and again he had to go around a gully made too dangerous by the amassed snowdrifts, and every time he had to get his bearings again, deciding on the right course in the middle of an unfamiliar wood, with the road far away.

The samurai stumbled and fell as he felt the snow give beneath his left foot. *A snow kami*, he thought, imagining what kind of figure he had made by dropping into the fresh snow. He pushed himself to all four, sending a prayer to Amaterasu to keep him warm until he reached his master. *The Hantei*, he thought - or whispered; he could not hear any sound over the roar of blood coursing through his near-frozen ears; *the Hantei I serve; a direct and unbroken line from me through my master and all their masters, all the way to the Hantei. Do not let me fail him.*

With a mighty roar disrupting the silence of the frozen landscape he rose, adjusted his backpack and started moving again - strong and unbroken.

One step became two, four, a dozen, a hundred. A thousand. Each step was a victory over exhaustion and exposure. But, to no avail. He stumbled once again. The snow was no longer drifting but falling steadily, and he had to wade through a thick layer of snow. He fell down under the weight he was carrying - a weight heightened by the pounds of snow, pushing him down. He rose, only to stumble a third time a few yards further down the forest. In pain, cold and frustrated, his thoughts going both to his master and the one he had left at the way station, he closed his eyes - he knew he would not rise a third time, not in this weather, not alone and unaided.

"You have strayed too far from the path, samurai-san," a voice then said - a deep and ominous voice, but the most lovely voice the samurai had ever heard. "You penetrated too deeply into the forest, and the snow is filling the few footsteps you left behind," another voice said, broken with age but still strong and carrying the legacy of the voice the speaker must have had in her youth. "You should not have come this way," a third voice said, young and caring, "have you forgotten the compact you made with us regarding these woodlands here?"

He lifted his head, and saw the most beautiful women he had ever seen, surrounded by a halo of snow. He blinked, disbelieving, and when he opened his eyes again he saw that the youngest of them - there were three, going from ancient to very young, yet he felt they were sisters nonetheless - knelt beside him, extending an ice-cold hand to him, feeling his brow.

Somehow feeling he was in good hands, the samurai closed his eyes again and fell asleep.

Spring

It was spring, outside. Somehow he knew it was spring - spring going to summer, the peasants filling the fields taking care of the rice, the samurai drilling and training in the dojo and on the exertion terrain. It was spring, he had seen *the spring, but the spring was not here.*

The samurai looked out of the sole window of his sparsely furnished abode and saw the snow piling higher than the windowsill - yet he did not feel the cold. He had not felt cold ever since his almost-fatal journey - if it had only been that: almost fatal. He did not know. Maybe it was his curse or his *punishment* to stay here, in this place, rather than ascend or at least pass over. He shook his head to clear it from these thoughts distracting him - he was a man of swift action, not thought.

He finished preparing his traveling pack and hoisted it on his back before opening the shoji screen and leaving the room. As always, the house was seemingly empty and his privacy to perform this by now ritualized act was respected. Because every day since arriving in this land in-and-yet-out-Rokugan, the samurai had made his way, fully packed and prepared, through the eternal snow around the maidens' abode to the border of that snow-line, to look at the lands beyond. They never interfered with that, never tried to keep him from leaving them, burdened with their secrets and duties though he was. Whenever he wanted for something, it was there - and since companionship was something he desired greatly in this white waste, he spent much time with the youngest of the maidens living in that crystal lodge.

It had been many days now - he had tried to keep track of days, but in this land without sunrise or sunset, he had no way of knowing. Eternally overcast, grey clouds only disappearing in huge showers of snowfall, the sky offered no aid at all for timekeeping. Except that this day, he felt the change of seasons.

She had introduced herself as Shourai and her sisters - for they were three sisters living together - as Iwaku and Touza. They were not mortal, not human - he had not been surprised, for their beauty and stature named them greater than human. She said that in Rokugan, they were known as the Yuki-no-Onna, the snow maidens, and that the three of them had earned this place in Rokugan and yet not part of it in return for a service they had given to the first of the Hantei - earning them respite and sanctuary from the first Akodo, the huntsman.

Every day the same hard journey, for it was a long walk, even if the cold wouldn't touch him. Yet even on the day he had first seen that the snow outside had melted and the world was green and alive again, he had turned his back to that land and had gone back to the Crystal lodging. And to her.

They had grown close together - he being lost, in a land he did not understand with rites and habits he could not comprehend, she having been alone except for her sisters for ages. It was just natural that they had lain together, the laughter of the snow maiden like the peal of little bells as her heart melted. It had been too long for him too, the samurai reflected. And afterwards they had made vows to each other, impossible vows for they were too far apart, too different. It was best if they never saw each other again.

He reached the border, and saw the lush and green lands of his daimyo shimmering in the distance, beyond the woodlands - the first time the snow outside had melted -like the snow maiden- and the world was green and alive again.

If you leave, we will never meet again, he heard her voice echoing in his head. *Even this meeting was not foreseen, forbidden. We of the Yuki-no-Onna are not to mingle amongst mortals; just as you mortals are not to know of us and our land. Once you came, the Hantei and the Akodo, the Hida and the Shiba, for knowledge, for wisdom, for what strength and understanding we could offer to the divine. You, mortal born from two mortals – you we have much to offer, but less to give.* And he saw her face as if she stood before him - cold and white and precious to him as porcelain. A single tear, warm and salt, marring her beauty - melting its way through the ice of her face.

Turning his back to duty and Rokugan, the samurai made his way back through snowdrifts, for some reason proceeding as easily as if there was no snow at all.

That was the last day the samurai went looking at the world without. Slowly, haltingly, the snow maidens taught him their lore and initiated him in their rites while Shourai taught him of their life and their place in the Celestial Order. They taught him so that when the solstice came, he could participate in performing that great ritual - and he married his Shourai that day; drifting evermore further apart from the Rokugan he belonged to. Some

days he would not even think back to that time, or to the Clan or Family the name of which he bore. He had found love here in this small spot in the middle of Rokugan, yet apart from it, distanced by ritual and ancient compact and spirituality, love deeper and stronger than his duty to his lord. Sworn an oath to the Snow Maiden who had conquered his heart, stronger than the one he had sworn as a youth.

He was their protector when intruders came into their domain - not from Rokugan, for that road was open but a few heartbeats each season, but from other realms and places, where claws and tusks rule. He was their acolyte when the prayers had to be said. He was their companion, when the long years since the first Hantei weighed heavily on them even in that timeless place. He *belonged* with them.

Time passes

But he did not belong in their lands. Time passed, and what seemed like days in the secluded glen were years in the lands beyond their snowdrifts. The few visitors from the other lands beyond the snowline – stragglers, peasants, woodcutters half-mad from exhaustion and exposure, never other samurai - fed him sparingly with news, but they never stayed long; the place clearly more frightening than peaceful for them.

And so one day the warrior heard of his master's plight. It was his Shourai who had found the peasant, his Shourai who had tried to kill the starving man to conceal the news he brought, the news that shattered the false serenity of the everlasting snow lands. It was his Shourai who tried to bury alive his kinsman-from-afar. He had intervened, too late to save the man's life but in time to hear his story, the odd glance in the snowmaiden's eyes the only sign that she recognized the warring families' names in the visitor's wild tales from the stories he had spun upon arriving in her lands.

He had risen after the straggler had died, and without a word had started packing his armor - when had that rusted away so much? Did he not look after it each day or at least most of the days? - and the meager belongings he had possessed when arriving here. And lastly he took his blade from the sword stand in the center place of the house. Only when fully prepared did he return to face Shourai, who had not moved from her seat next to the dead man.

"Will you not speak, Snow Maiden? Will you not tell me to linger here for even longer than I have already tarried? For days I have sat here, drunk your tea, eaten your meals while my master, my friends fight for their lives out there? Will you now attempt to slay me too, if I not comply to your wishes?" The maiden kept her silence, eyes cast down at the floor. "Will you not speak," the samurai continued, tender now as he put down his katana and sat next to her.

"Do not go, samurai-kun," she spoke, tears gathering in her eyes. "Days you say, but years have passed in the outer world. Your master, your friends, your enemies have long passed into Yomi, and all who are left in those lands beyond the snow are strangers to you, strangers of another age. You do not belong any longer there, just as you are not a samurai any longer though you retain the trappings of that caste. You belong here, as your heart is here now."

Tenderly, friendly, lovingly – even after what he had seen, even after he had found out just how different she was from him, or rather how alike - the samurai put his arm around the Yuki-no-Onna. "Shourai-kun, you called me a samurai; a samurai is not just what I profess to be; a samurai is who I am. It is what you fell in love with - my loyalty, my sense of duty, my honor, and my compassion. I do not carry this sword, I am this sword. That it has lain idle in this room for so many years while I rested and feasted is already unforgivable. I cannot abandon my duty any longer. You say the master I swore my oath to is dead - well, then so be it. But my oath was also to the land he governed, the people he led. The land is still there, the people still live there. I have to fight for them."

He saw the border of the snowline now - far more visible in the fading light of one of the last days of summer than it had been in the midst of winter when he had first crossed it and left Rokugan for this realm. A whisper reached his ears as he crossed the border, as if three women were chanting a far way off - but then he realized it was the wind rustling through the trees. One last time he looked back at Forever Snow, but it had already disappeared in the twilight - only the Hayaku forest remained.

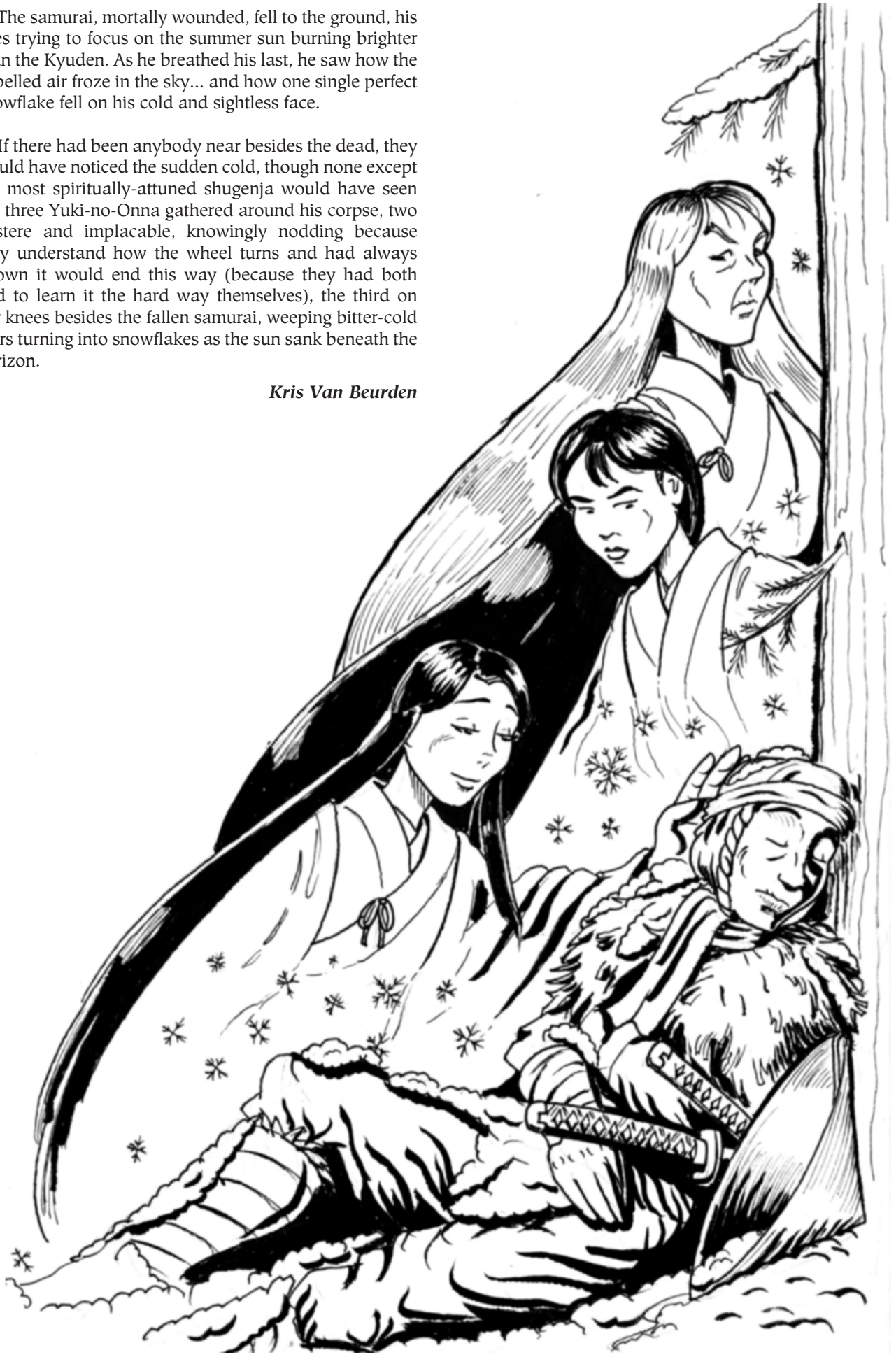
No regrets, he thought, *neither for the time I lost in leisure there nor for the duty scorned here*. And he walked down the path he had strayed from, so long ago. But with every step he made, he felt the stolen time come down hard on his shoulders - two score years he had never lived under the Moon and Sun set on him, and the brisk walk of the young warrior became a drag as his hair turned white like the snow still caking his armor, and the weight of broken dreams bowed his back.

He passed bodies now, of ashigaru warriors wearing the colors of his master and those of the invader - and dead samurai, too. He almost recognized many a face, ever realizing it was a son or grandson of a man he had known whom he saw. Corpses of peasants littered the rice fields, and crows settled to feast. *I have returned too late*, he thought, dropping his travelling bag. His abandoned march finally completed, the samurai made it to the kyuden's courtyard, to find that only ashes remained of his master's household. Only ashes and the last remnants of the warriors that had ruined the land. With a kiai shout, the samurai drew his katana and charged his enemies. For one last instant, the strength of his youth filled him, and his master's foes fell before his sword - but not before they maimed him, too.

The samurai, mortally wounded, fell to the ground, his eyes trying to focus on the summer sun burning brighter than the Kyuden. As he breathed his last, he saw how the expelled air froze in the sky... and how one single perfect snowflake fell on his cold and sightless face.

If there had been anybody near besides the dead, they would have noticed the sudden cold, though none except the most spiritually-attuned shugenja would have seen the three Yuki-no-Onna gathered around his corpse, two austere and implacable, knowingly nodding because they understand how the wheel turns and had always known it would end this way (because they had both had to learn it the hard way themselves), the third on her knees besides the fallen samurai, weeping bitter-cold tears turning into snowflakes as the sun sank beneath the horizon.

Kris Van Beurden



Challenge, Focus, Strike

Racing Tomorrow

This CFS is intended for use with a party consisting entirely of Human characters. Set in contemporary Rokugan (that is, in the year 1170), it is intended to be an innovative way of introducing Nonhumans into an existing campaign.

Challenge

The characters have been recruited by the City Magistrate of Zakyo Toshi, a Scorpion samurai named Bayushi Tadame, to discreetly investigate a series of bizarre kidnappings that have occurred on the road south of the city. It appears that travelers on their way to Zakyo Toshi are vanishing, only to turn up on the road within a few days with no memory of their whereabouts or events during the intervening time. They are otherwise unharmed, and have not, apparently, even had any of their possessions or koku taken from them. The dozen or so people who are known to have been kidnapped in this way seem to share little in common; they include peasants, merchants, geisha and at least one ronin. No Clan samurai are known to have been taken, but this may be because none are prepared to admit to such a humiliating ordeal; the exact number of kidnappings, therefore, isn't clear. All of the kidnappings have occurred along a stretch of road several miles long, which lies generally less than a mile from the easternmost edge of the Shinomen Mori. Bayushi Tadame wants the matter to be dealt with quickly and quietly, so that rumor does not become panic; the City relies on a steady flow of visitors to fuel its "pleasure" economy and any disruption would be costly. He has chosen the party to assist in order to avoid bringing "official" attention to the matter (in any case, his own Magistrates typically have their hands full just keeping order in Zakyo Toshi). For the purpose of this investigation, Tadame has deputized the party as temporary yoriki. This gives them limited investigative powers in and around Zakyo Toshi, including identifying witnesses and recording their testimonies; conducting arrests; and conduct questioning of prisoners (but this does NOT include conducting torture). Any such prisoners are to be immediately delivered into Tadame's custody. If the players have any doubts about accepting this assignment, the heads of the various Clan delegations in Zakyo Toshi will make it clear that they expect cooperation with Tadame (as the Clans all, to one degree or another, benefit from the commerce conducted in the city!)

Focus

It will quickly become apparent to the investigators that there are no apparent links between the kidnappings and anyone or anything in Zakyo Toshi itself. If the party investigates the stretch of road in question, they will likewise find little of interest...until a sudden, powerful sensation of "disconnection" comes over them. Nothing they can do will counter this; there are no checks against Traits or Rings and no counterspell or protection—mundane, magical or otherwise—will affect the phenomenon. They will briefly feel as though they are viewing themselves from a strangely detached, external perspective, before everything goes black.

Strike

When they regain consciousness, they players' normal perspective will be restored...and yet, it won't. The players will find that they are not entirely themselves. Mentally and spiritually, they are very much their own characters, but physically, they are now very different—they are Nezumi (see below for a game mechanics description of this). As they react to this and take stock of their surroundings, they will find that they are lying in a deep forest clearing, probably somewhere in the Shinomen Mori. Their human body lies adjacent to each of them, alive, but apparently deeply asleep. The only other individual around is another Nezumi. He is obviously very old, his fur is tangled and matted, his muzzle is gray and he is bent with age. However, his eyes are bright and intelligent and hold a manic light. He will introduce himself as It'kr'tek, a Nezumi Nametaker, a powerful shaman capable of distorting reality to the extent that individuals' identities can be changed, swapped or even obliterated. He has used his powers to embed the player characters' personae, intact, into Nezumi bodies. He will explain that he recovered and magically preserved these after the bulk of his race faced the phenomenon called Tomorrow in the Realm of Dream and were then stranded there.

At this point, It'kr'tek's purpose becomes clear. He was on a far-distant quest when the call for the Nezumi to rally against Tomorrow came, and was unable to join his people for their last and greatest battle. Wracked with guilt, he is obsessed with joining the Nezumi in Dream. And he believes he has found a way. Not far from the clearing they occupy lies an ancient Naga temple, essentially undisturbed since before the first time the Naga entered the Great Sleep. It'kr'tek has studied the temple and believes it contains a portal which will allow him to

enter Dream. However, the portal is protected by ancient wards and guardians that the old Nametaker is unable to defeat alone. Moreover, the whole temple is warded to prevent entry by any creature other than a Naga...or, fortuitously, a Nezumi. At the time the wards were set, the Ratlings were essentially pets and livestock for the serpent-men and, therefore, unaffected by the wards. Using his Name magic, It'kr'tek has been attempting to "recruit" allies to assist in his quest to enter the temple and access the portal (explaining the kidnappings). The party is the first suitable group of potential allies he has found. He explains that if they assist him, he will provide them with the means to reverse his Name magic and restore themselves to their own bodies, which will remain, preserved and warded, in the clearing. He will claim that there is no other way to undo his Name magic, as no Nametaker remains in Ningen-do powerful enough to do so. And there is further incentive; within a few weeks, Nezumi physiology will begin to assert itself and the player/Nezumi characters will begin to forget. Eventually, they will not remember any reality other than their Nezumi one. If they attempt to overpower It'kr'tek, they will find it rather easy to do so; he has already employed his most powerful magic against them. However, even if the party can identify which of the numerous Memory Sticks in his possession is the one It'kr'tek he has crafted to undo his Name magic, without his explanation of its function, they will be unable to use it. The old Nezumi will indicate the direction to the Naga temple and wait for the party to get underway.

Additional

Obviously, this CFS requires the players' characters to be altered into Nezumi. How the Gamemaster does this ranges from the very simple (change the characters' names to Nezumi ones and carry on) to the much more complex, but detailed (everyone generates new Nezumi characters from scratch). An intermediate method, which is relatively quick and easy, but will still result in changed but unique characters, follows. Each player begins with the generic Nezumi character sheet provided below, which is based on a Nezumi Scout of the Crippled Bone Tribe. Players then perform the following additions and substitutions:

-Set Insight and Insight Rank to the player character's;

-Set the Awareness, Willpower, Intelligence and Perception Traits to those of the player character. Recalculate all corresponding Rings accordingly;

-Set Void equal to the player character's Void. Normally, Nezumi cannot spend Void points in any way. However, given the unique nature of this Nezumi/Human hybrid, this limitation is waived;

-Add the Advantages and Disadvantages possessed by the player character. However, the Gamemaster will have to exercise judgment regarding which would be unchanged, which would be modified or which may be nullified or end up being completely irrelevant;

-Add all Skills possessed by the player character. However, apply the following revisions:

-Reduce all Social, Performance, Craft and Artisan Skills by one Rank, to reflect the fact that even the most refined character is now speaking from a Nezumi mouth and working with Nezumi paws;

-Cancel the Animal Handling Skill as it relates to horses and dogs, as those creatures react poorly to Nezumi;

-Reduce all Bugei skills except for Athletics, Battle and Hunting by one Rank, to reflect player characters not being used to Nezumi physiology (the Gamemaster may wish to waive this reduction after the players have spent a few days as Nezumi). Cancel the Horsemanship Skill, for reasons given above for Animal Handling;

-Increase Athletics by one Rank, as Nezumi are naturally agile creatures;

-Increase Stealth by one Rank, as Nezumi are also good at sneaking about; and

-More broadly, the Gamemaster should review all Skills, Spells, Kiho, Kata, Advantages and Disadvantages possessed by each player character, and determine if it would reasonably remain unchanged, be assigned a bonus or penalty to its Rank or associated TN, or even be irrelevant and just discounted while the player is in Nezumi form; and

-Add all Spells and Kiho possessed by the character. All martial Kiho have their TN to hit for their required unarmed strike increased by 10;

-Add any Kata possessed by the character. However, their Preparation Time is double and their duration is halved;

-Set Honor to the player character's Honor;

-Set Niche to the player character's Status. However, this is only with respect to other party members, who know which player character has become which Nezumi. For all other purposes, treat it as 1.0; and

-Allow the player to retrieve any belongings from his dormant human character.

An even more detailed and "personalized" method is for each player to create a new Nezumi character from scratch, using the method given in Creatures of Rokugan. The above changes to Insight, Insight Rank, various Traits, etc. would then be applied.

Assuming the players manage to regain their human forms, then it is suggested that, in addition to also keeping whatever XP they have gained as Nezumi, their characters also receive one free Rank in each of Lore: Nezumi and Stealth.

The other matter requiring attention is what happens if some or all of the players somehow fail in their quest to regain their human form (or even choose not to!) If they die as Nezumi, then they should be considered dead, but treated as though they died as a human (whatever forces turn the Kharmic Wheel understand when a person is forced into a different form and dies that way!) If they survive, however, after a number of weeks equal to the total of their Awareness and Willpower Traits, the character will begin to forget his past existence. In the first week, any time he or she attempts to use a Skill or otherwise perform an activity that would require an awareness of his or her human memories, a successful raw Willpower roll is require against TN 5. The TN increases by 5 every

subsequent week, to a maximum of 100. Any reasonable measure to actively promote "remembering" his or her human existence (for example, another character plays the role of a "Rememberer", recounting the human character's life and deeds each week) will reduce the TN by 30. Accordingly, if the Nezumi character is somehow encouraged to "remember" each week, he or she will always have at least 30% chance of being able to recall being human. Of course, a Gamemaster may simply wish to avoid such complications altogether and simply have all characters who survive the adventure revert back to their human form.

Generic Nezumi Scout

Insight: Same as Player
Rank: Same as Player

Air: X
Reflexes: 3
Awareness: Same as Player
Earth: X
Stamina: 2
Willpower: Same as Player
Fire: X
Agility: 3
Intelligence: Same as Player
Water: X
Strength: 2
Perception: Same as Player
Void: Same as Player

Honor: Same as Player
Niche: Same as Player's Status, but only with respect to other party members; otherwise treat as 1.0
Name: 1.0

Skills: See text
Disadvantages: None
Advantages: Player chooses either Clever Tail or Hardy
Equipment: light hide armor, one Peasant Weapon or Nezumi weapon of player's choice, leather pouch (vial of war paint, wide-brimmed straw hat, week's rations, flint and steel, fishing gear)
Technique: Clever and Brave - Add twice Insight Rank to Rolls for the following Skills: Athletics, Defense, Hunting, Lore: Shadowlands, Stealth, any one Weapon Skill (player's choice), and any one other Skill (player's choice) ; add bonus equal to Air Ring to all Stealth and Athletics rolls
Tribal Ability: +1k0 to all unarmed attacks

Favored Child

This CFS is set in 1132, immediately following the Clan Wars and at the outset of the War Against the Darkness. The Naga have laid siege to the Dragon provinces in response to the severing of the Naga Kazaq from The Akasha by the Shadow-corrupted Hitomi. Their campaign against the Dragon ends when the Lying Darkness escapes, and they prepare to return to the aid of the Crab, who they abandoned in 1130 in the midst of a campaign against the Shadowlands.

Challenge

In the wake of the Clan War and their recapture of Shiro Hiruma, the Crab are weakened and over-extended. Seeking assistance from the other Clans in guarding the Kaiu Wall until their armies can be reconstituted, they have invited diplomatic missions to Shiro Kaotsuki no Higashi (Face of the East Castle). The party is involved in one such delegation, which has recently completed. They now journey south from the Face of the East Castle, on a path which will take them around the southern tip of the Shinomen Mori and then back north, into Rokugan. As they near the Watchtower of the East, they will note smoke rising from a small village located a short distance east of the road.

Focus

Investigating, the party will find a small village located a short distance from the western edge of the Shinomen. The village apparently houses wood-cutters and their families, who make a living harvesting trees and dressing lumber from the nearby forest (those who make a successful Lore: Crab roll against a TN of 15 will know that the Crab recently entered into an agreement with the Naga to harvest trees from the forest, as long as they stayed clear of certain areas the Naga wished to preserve. As far as anyone is able to tell, that agreement has not been breached). However, the situation in the village is dire. The village looks like the aftermath of a battle. Bodies are strewn about, while blood and gore soak the ground and spatter the walls of buildings. Smoke rises from burned out houses, and even animals, such as the oxen used to haul wood from the forest, lay dead, their bodies hacked by axe-blows. Most unsettling, however, is that there is no apparent enemy…no trace of bandits, no indication of marauding creatures from the nearby forest, nothing. Closer examination will reveal that the village's inhabitants appear to have simply turned on one another in an orgy of unrestrained violence. As the party searches through the ruins, they will suddenly become aware of being watched. A moment later, they will notice a Naga watching them warily from the edge of the village. The creature, which is holding a knocked bow on the party, is obviously badly wounded. But this will not stop him from challenging the party, demanding to know, oddly enough, if they "are themselves".

Strike

Assuming they are able to de-escalate the situation, the party will learn that the Naga is a Greensnake scout named Estoth. At first, Estoth is reluctant to reveal what he may know to the party, but he is clearly hiding something. However, if the party is able to heal him, and thereby gain his trust—or if they are not, and Estoth concludes that he is going to die—he will open up to the party. He will explain that he is the sole survivor of a party that set out several days previously, following the trail of another Naga, an Abomination named Queltreth. Cast out from the Naga for refusing to participate in "cleansing rituals", intended to remove the spiritual corruption that caused him to be born as an Abomination, Queltreth stole an object of immense value to the Naga…a massive black

pearl called "the Favored Child of the Pale Eye". Such a pearl is rare in the extreme, and although Estoth is not a jakla, he understands enough to know that the "Child" is powerful focus for the spiritual energy of The Akasha. It was by using the "Child" that Queltreth was able to expose the people of the village to the full psychic weight of The Akasha; with minds never intended to partake of such a shared consciousness, much less one magnified by the power of the "Child", the humans of the village were almost immediately driven insane. In the resulting explosion of violence and destruction, the Naga tracking Queltreth were overwhelmed, with only Esthoth surviving. Queltreth has now fled the scene, and appears to be heading north and west, directly towards the Twilight Mountains. Should the "Child" be lost in the mountains and found by someone or something bent on evil—or, worse should Queltreth carry the "Child" through the mountains and make it into the Shadowlands beyond—disaster could befall the Naga. The Akasha itself could be threatened with harm or corruption. The potential threat to Rokugan should be obvious. More immediately, Estoth is concerned about the reaction of the Crab to an apparent attack by the Naga on one of their holdings. The Crab are still incensed by the Naga's apparent defection only two years previously during their combined campaign to retake Shiro Hiruma.

Most of the Naga forces are still making their way south from the Dragon lands, and are weeks away from the southern Shinomen. Estoth confirms that, through the Akasha, the Naga remaining the Shinomen are aware of the threat, but any assistance from them will be limited and, moreover, is still days away. He appeals to the party to assist him, the Naga and, by extension, Rokugan, in recovering the "Child", and doing so in a way that will not further damage relations with the Crab.

Additional

This CFS is a more conventional sort than "Racing Tomorrow", in that it doesn't rely on the party containing any particular type of character. However, the adventure centers around the Naga, so Naga player characters would fit the setting well. If they don't already exist in the party, it would be easy to add them by simply having them enter the story as other survivors of Estoth's party. Nezumi characters would, on the other hand, could find the setting a difficult one...remember that, from a Naga's point of view, they are potentially food. This isn't to say they shouldn't be included. It could be very interesting playing a Nezumi character in this CFS!

Naga characters will definitely have a several advantages. First, it would much easier to gain the trust of Estoth. Second, Naga characters would reasonably have more information about the nature of pearls in general, and would likely have at least heard about the giant black pearl called "the Favored Child of the Pale Eye". They would also have the advantage of The Akasha, which would allow them to, through Estoth, better understand the nature of what they are dealing with. No stats are provided for Queltreth, so Gamemasters should feel free to produce an opponent worthy of their particular party. It is suggested that the Gamemaster be creative in selecting the nature of Queltreth's Abomination; the more dangerous and unstable he is, the better an antagonist he'll be for the party. As for the "Child", it is given brief mention in Creatures of Rokugan, but no details, so this is also something the Gamemaster can customize as he sees fit. In general, though, Queltreth should be a jakla of sufficient strength to be a match for the party on his own; the "Child" should then increase his powers to make him a truly dangerous foe. The challenge for the party will be separating Queltreth from the "Child" in order to make it possible to defeat him. How they go about this is the party's problem!

Finally, the Gamemaster should keep in mind the strained relationship between the Crab and the Naga. Crab are likely to be deeply suspicious of any Naga; the destruction of the Crab wood-cutter's village by Naga magic will only exacerbate this. Gamemaster's are encouraged to play this up, allowing for another source of dramatic tension for the party as they chase Queltreth. For example, as they journey through the Twilight Mountains, consider the reaction if they encounter a Crab patrol. Will they seek to avoid it? Will they seek its assistance? How much information will they offer to the Crab? How will the situation be different if their party contains Estoth alone, or one or more other Naga? And how will Crab player characters in the party react?

Skin-Deep

This CFS is set in contemporary Rokugan in Crane lands, but it could just as easily be set in almost any other Rokugani time period or location.

Challenge

The party is attending court at Kyuden Doji, in the Crane lands. They may be aides or yojimbo to Clan delegates, or they may be delegates themselves. Court has been underway for about two weeks, full of the usual push and pull intrigue of inter-Clan politics, but otherwise uneventful. Much of the focus of negotiations is around mining rights in the lands of the Sparrow, where several rich veins of gold have recently been discovered. Immediately under pressure from several Clans—most notably, the Crane, the Scorpion, Crab and Mantis—for access to these rich deposits, the Sparrow have turned to the Imperial Otomo family to assist them in dealing with the much larger and more powerful Great Clans. No one is quite sure how many discreet negotiations are underway in quiet corners, remote garden terraces or unobtrusive chambers throughout the sprawl of Kyuden Doji. However, the various Otomo delegates seem quite pleased with themselves, which probably means that they have managed to maneuver the Clans into divergent and competing positions.

Focus

As court opens on the fifteenth day, those in attendance are surprised to learn that the Scorpion have abruptly withdrawn from negotiations for the Sparrow gold. They are even more surprised when word spreads that the Lion are now in contention, and are prepared to use military force to take the gold mines, if necessary. A

short time later, the head of the Lion delegation appears in open court to recant this position, stating that he has taken no such position. Over the next several days, the court will dissolve into confusion as contrary and contradictory positions are adopted, attacked and refuted. It is clear that something has gone very wrong with the court, but no one is quite sure what. The player characters are selected by their various delegations to participate in a cooperative effort to ferret out what is going on. The heads of the delegations make little secret of the fact that they suspect the negotiations are being deliberately sabotaged—some level barely-veiled accusations at the Scorpion, the Otomo or even darker agents.

When the players investigate, they will find that the troubles seem to originate among lower-ranking members of various delegations. Senior members and delegation heads are incensed that their directions are being ignored or changed. However, those responsible seem to have disappeared. At least a dozen low-level courtiers and diplomats have vanished from among the various delegations. Fear, anger and suspicion permeate the court as the delegations retreat to their embassies, demanding that their Crane hosts restore order. The Lion and Dragon delegations are threatening to leave. By the nineteenth day, normal proceedings of court have all but ceased and the threat of serious damage to inter-Clan relations looms.

Strike

The culprits are none other than Shapeshifting spirits—specifically, Bakeneko or cat-spirits from Sakkaku, the Realm of Mischief, who have been employing their shape-changing abilities to infiltrate Clan delegations at the beginning of court. However, the Shapeshifters are united in a common purpose that goes well beyond simple tomfoolery. A powerful Shapeshifting spirit from Chikushudo is determined that the gold deposits in the Sparrow lands will go unexploited as, unknown to any human, mining operations will disturb the surrounding lands and put at risk a stable portal between Chikushudo and Ningen-do. The spirit, which calls itself Kemuri (smoke, a self-homage to its inconstant nature), has its own purposes for wishing the portal to remain unknown and undisturbed, at least for the time being. To that end, it has recruited the Bakeneko from Sakkaku to do disrupt the human court at which the negotiations for the mines are taking place. Of course, none of this information will come easily to the party, although if their ranks include Shapeshifters, they will benefit from the particular abilities and insights such spirits would provide. If they do learn of Kemuri and its enigmatic purpose, their next challenge will be determining who or what, and where Kemuri is. If they pick up Kemuri's trail, they will obtain hints that the spirit may actually be present in the court at Kyuden Doji. However, unlike most Shapeshifters, Kemuri is capable of assuming many forms, including those of other beings. Again, any Shapeshifters that are members of the party may have advantages in tracking the elusive Kemuri. In any case, this situation is a complex and delicate one, as anyone's identity could be in doubt; wrongful accusations in such an atmosphere of suspicion and distrust could do more harm than any Shapeshifting spirit. The party will have to tread very, very carefully.

Additional

The hallmark of this CFS is secrecy and suspicion. This could make introducing Shapeshifting characters very interesting; for example, perhaps the party "outs" a Bakeneko and, capricious creature that it is, it offers to join and assist them. Or, perhaps Kemuri is merely one party in a larger conflict occurring in Chikushudo and the other realms, so a player takes the role of a Shapeshifter opposing Kemuri's scheming, and offers to ally with the party. In either case, will the party trust the Shapeshifter? And who among the various delegates are also Shapeshifters? Are there other Shapeshifters in the party already? Is Kemuri itself taking the place of a party member? This is an excellent scenario for a clever Gamemaster to ramp up the party's paranoia by capitalizing on the secretive and wanton nature of the Shapeshifting spirits.

As for Kemuri, the Gamemaster is encouraged to use his or her imagination; the intent is that Kemuri be a powerful spirit capable of assuming most any form. However, given the nature of the CFS, Kemuri may not even be present in Kyuden Doji. Moreover, no indication of Kemuri's greater purpose is given, which is deliberate. The Gamemaster can choose to shape the creature's intent to suit the needs of the campaign. It should simply be kept in mind that Kemuri and the other Shapeshifters are not actually "evil", at least in the greater, Celestial Order-sense of the word; they are truly neutral, essentially self-interested beings whose purposes are their own. That said, whatever Kemuri is up to, although it isn't necessarily "evil", it may still be quite harmful or destructive from the point of view of the Rokugani. Of course, the Gamemaster may simply choose to leave it as a complete mystery, further highlighting the strange and otherworldly nature of the Shapeshifters.

Soshi Ukyo

Vengeance from Beyond the Grave

Challenge

The characters are tasked to investigate a series of mysterious deaths plaguing a city. This works perfectly if the characters are the classic party of magistrates. If they are not, however, simply consider they stumble upon the story as they travel through the city. The important point is that the person asking them to investigate is the superior to the city's governor, not the governor himself.

The deaths cover a wide range of cases, from people drowned, stabbed, burnt, suffocated, attacked by wolves, snakes or spiders, etc., affecting anyone from the lowly eta to high ranking samurai, and what was initially discarded as peasant fears and rumors has now escalated to something very serious.

The recently appointed Governor has a hard time trying to solve the problem alone. He wants to prove himself, and this prevented him from asking for help. The

deaths could not have come at a worse time, as he is trying to make people forget he became governor only due to the mysterious death (a sudden illness that suspiciously looks like poisoning, though nothing was proven) of the previous governor, who was his elder brother. He will certainly not be very helpful to the characters with their investigation, as he considers them outside interference, sent by his superior to report on his inability to elucidate the murders.

Focus

Investigation will reveal a few elements: the deaths can be grouped into two separate types. The first group contains all the deaths caused by animals. At first, it was peasants killed by mysteriously appearing and vanishing animals, in what looked like normal, if gruesome, accidents. But other more recent deaths involve things like a guard choking on earthworms that appeared in his mouth and nose, or a merchant eaten alive by a horde of black bugs. These attacks have followed a progression, targeting men and women from the lower castes first, climbing the social ladder up to the samurai class, with attacks that appear more and more mystical. The second group consists of all the other deaths, caused by accidents with sharp tools or weapons (a geisha stabbed through the throat by a pair of hair pins, a noble woman impaled on shards of her mirror, etc.) or involving inanimate objects (a woman suffocated in the folds of her kimono, another stabbed with a hundred still burning incense sticks, etc.). All the victims in this group were women, and all were attractive women. This should let the players determine that there are actually two murderers with a specific modus operandi each. As the investigation progresses and more deaths are reported/witnessed by the characters, so the level of supernatural increases to reach a point where there is no doubt that the murderers possess magical abilities.

Another piece of information concerns the previous governor, who was famous in some circles as a womanizer that had a new conquest in his bed as often as every week, only to discard her the next day. It is also widely known that his younger brother is ambitious, and resented their father for choosing tradition over reason, which led the lecherous, barely competent, elder brother to inherit the governor position over the ambitious but more honorable younger brother. It was a frequent cause of arguments between the brothers.

Strike

The current governor didn't kill his elder brother to take his position. Despite their differences, they were of the same blood and the younger brother would never stoop so low as to commit fratricide. The ghost of the former governor believes otherwise though, and he is convinced his brother murdered him. To get revenge, he elaborated a plan to undermine his brother's position, making him look weak and unable to manage the city. He can summon and control all sorts of animals, and has used them in creative ways to disrupt the city's economy. First by killing peasants, then going closer and closer to his brother, who he intends to kill last, only when his humiliation and unworthiness is clear in the eyes of all. The only way to stop him is to reveal to him the real murderer and convince him of his brother's innocence.

The person who poisoned the previous governor is a spurned geisha who worked in a minor geisha house of the city. Full of naiveté, she fell in love with the womanizer, who abused her just as he did with all his other conquests. When she realized this, her sorrow was so deep it quickly turned into murderous anger. She managed to get a rare poison that she gave to her former lover during his next visit. Once he died, she took her own life out of desperation, and her spirit became a vengeful ghost that went after all the other women that had shared her lover's bed. She uses her telekinetic abilities to create deadly accidents with whatever items were available around her victim. The only way to get rid of her is to let the ghost of the governor deal with her: if they are forced to confront each other, their mutual hate and madness will cancel each other out and they will annihilate each other, finally throwing themselves through the veil to the spirit realms where they belong.

Convincing the misogynist ghost of the governor of his mistake will require the help of the younger brother, good role-playing, and an Honor roll with a high TN. Forcing the confrontation between the two spirits can be done in several ways: the ashes of the governor could be brought to the geisha's modest grave, or he could be presented one of her items (like the empty vial of poison that the ghost will instinctively recognize), or a Kitsu shugenja could simply summon them both at the same location.

Be sure to play up the horror theme of this CFS, using more and more creative deaths and upping the body count during the investigation to keep the pressure on the players. All in all, it is not a long adventure and it can be run in an afternoon, but it can be quite intense as the ghosts can prove dangerous and elusive.

Mike Brodu

Memories Make the Man (or Woman)

Challenge

Doing battle with a minion of the Shadow Dragon, some of the players have their Names damaged; though not something that the Rokugani understand in the same way as the Nezumi, their Names are just as important. People, even loved ones, fail to recognise or remember the afflicted players – perhaps they even begin to forget things about themselves.

Focus

A shugenja that the players approach can sense that there is a problem within them, and can even tell that the essence of their soul has been warped and twisted, unfortunately he can do nothing to help the players. He does however suggest they seek out a Nezumi shaman as they possess methods for changing the souls of creatures – which they call their "Names". Maybe such a Shaman could "repair" their souls.

Strike

After the battle against Tomorrow less than one hundred Nezumi still exist in Rokugan, shamans are even fewer. The players will first have to track down a shaman with enough power to help them and even then it's likely that the shaman will want something in return for his help.

Note: This CFS can also serve as the start of an ongoing campaign, beginning with the players dropped into the middle of the situation with no recollection of who they are or what has happened.

One option would be for the Gamemaster to develop characters for each of the players but not to let them see their character sheets or background, or perhaps to only let them know certain bits of information like their clan and school.

Bayushi Kinzo

Gargoyles

Challenge

A city governor asks the PCs to rescue his daughter who was kidnapped by a brigand. The governor claims he knows where this brigand has taken his daughter and even gives direction to the brigand's hideout as well as the general layout of the hideout and location of known traps.

Focus

Sure enough, the governor's directions are accurate, allowing the PCs to bypass some nasty traps, but one important thing diverges from the governor's account; the brigand seems to be a monstrous gargoyle-looking thing… Even stranger, once the monster is defeated, the daughter comes out and angrily lashes out verbally at the PCs.

Strike

It turns out that she wasn't abducted, but was secluded here by her father to prevent her from eloping with her true love; one of the city's rich merchant's son. His father then asked a shugenja that owed him a favor to craft a tireless guardian that would be able to watch over his daughter night and day until such time as he could cure her of this "disease" of loving one of the lower castes. Over time, the guardian fell in love with the daughter in its own innocent but misguided way and decided to keep anyone from getting near to her, even her own family. Even though she didn't love the monster back, the daughter came to appreciate the monster's company; which was pretty much the only company she had for so long, and she did like the irony of having her father's guardian turn on him like that. She eventually learned from the creature that it was actually a Zokujin whose tribe was captured by a mad shugenja (the one which owed a favor to the governor) and who was experimented upon by him. Now the daughter is not an expert magistrate, but what the Zokujin described sounded pretty much like maho. Not only does the daughter ask that the PCs give the Zokujin an honorable burial, but that they also free the Zokujin's tribe from the mad shugenja and possible maho-tsukai to atone for having killed the poor abused and misguided creature.

The Bandits in the Forest

Challenge

The lord of a poor han (province) approaches the players. He explains that his han is poor and he took up to exploiting his land's meager forest to supplement his revenues. But recently a band of brigands have disrupted his lumbering. He has no men to spare to fight these brigands. He could petition his lord for help, but would rather avoid dragging his lord into this as this would imply incompetence. He assures the players that despite his apparent destitution he is quite well connected and could make it worth their while.

Focus

The "brigands" are some of the lord's own men. The forest he was lumbering has some occult significance (think kokoro nezuban mori from *Secrets of the Lion* p.18-19), and some of the more superstitious elements among the lord's men, samurai and heimin alike, have rebelled out of fear.

Strike

In truth, the forest is home to a passage to Chikushudo, the realm of animals. The recent lumbering has jeopardized the delicate equilibrium necessary for the passage's existence, and some of the local spirits are not too happy about this…

Kalajel

The Governor's Aides

This article introduces in greater details three characters that are at the higher levels of Hanami Mura's administration: Usagi Kiko (the Governor's wife), Ujina Mariko, and Usagi Hotsuken.

As the voice of the Hare daimyo, Usagi Ginsei has the distinct duty to represent his lord to other clans' representatives and convey his announcements to them, all the while collecting their messages and petitions to forward the most important of them to the daimyo. The aging Usagi Ozaki has little patience for the courtly games, and Ginsei's primary role is to filter the valuable information obtained in court from the rest of the trivial discussions. Formal letters can still be directly addressed to the Hare daimyo, but thanks to Ginsei's service, he does not have to endure the tedium of court life.

The Hare are attentive to the fact that having a single person acting as a buffer between the clan's leadership and the rest of the Empire is a potential weak point that could be exploited. Thus, Ginsei receives the help of several close aides to perform his duties, first among them is his wife, Kiko.

Usagi Kiko

Usagi Kiko is a pleasant looking woman and a devoted wife who understands that nothing is more important than her duty to the Hare clan and her loyalty to her husband. She knows that Ginsei is having an affair with another woman, but she has not bothered to identify who that woman is, nor does she want to. As far as Kiko can witness, this affair does not have any impact on her husband's ability to perform his duties, so she chooses to overlook it. But it does not mean that she is not hurt by this situation; she just hides it very well. Ginsei suspects that she is aware of his adulterous activities, but since she has not brought up the topic in their private discussions, he continues seeing his mistress, albeit with the utmost discretion so as to not shame his wife.

Kiko was born among the Sparrow, and her marriage with Ginsei was arranged while he was training with the Kitsuki to strengthen the ties between the Sparrow and Hare clans. The ceremony was held a few months after Ginsei's return to Hare lands, and as it often happens in Rokugan, it was the first time they met. Both were resigned and met the demands of duty with honor, but there was no spark of love. She dutifully accompanied her husband to all his various assignments while he was a diplomat to the Great Clans' courts, developing her courtier skills and making friends of her own. Since Ginsei received the position of Hanami Mura's governor, she has become more active and can often be seen in the various courts that spontaneously appear around influential visiting samurai, informally representing her husband and clan.

Kiko and Ginsei have three children: Hayaku, a 15 year old boy who will soon pass his gempukku, and the 12 year old twin girls Akumi and Hitomi.

Usagi Kiko

Insight Rank 3 (Minor Clan Diplomat 1/Suzume Bushi 1/ Suzume Storyteller 1) - Insight: 188

Air: 3	**Earth: 2**	**Fire: 3**	**Water: 2**	**Void: 3**

Awareness: 4Willpower: 3 Intelligence: 4 Perception: 3

Honor: 3.5	**Glory: 1.5**	**Status: 4.6**

Skills: Calligraphy (Hare Clan Cipher) 3, Commerce 2, Courtier (Gossip, Manipulation, Political Maneuvering) 5, Deceit 2, Defense 1, Etiquette (Bureaucracy, Conversation, Sincerity) 5, Games (Sadane) 3, Kenjutsu 2, Kyujutsu 2, Lore: Heraldry , Lore: History 3, Lore: Law 5, Medicine 2, Storytelling 4, Tea Ceremony 5, Theology (Shintao) 1.
Advantages: Allies (Crane Courtier, Inf. 4/Dev. 1), Allies (Sparrow Courtier, Inf. 4/Dev.2), Balance, Clear Thinker, Ebisu's Blessing, Multiple Schools, Voice.
Disadvantages: Lost Love, Small, Soft-Hearted.

Errata

In the previous issue, the description and the map of Hanami Mura's surroundings mistakenly place the Naga city of Nirukti in the Cherry Blossom Snow Lake, supposedly underwater. The ruins of this city are in fact on the lake's shore, not too far from Siksa.

Note

Fealty & Freedom indicates that the Hare have only two courts: the largest in Shiro Usagi, the other in Kudo. This unambiguous description leaves little room for Hanami Mura, and thus anyone who wants his game to be as close to canon as possible should know that Hanami Mura, as portrayed here, is now incompatible with published facts.

Ujina Mariko

Ujina Mariko, the Head Magistrate of Hanami Mura, is an uncomplicated person leading a complicated life. She was born and grew up in Hanami Mura as the daughter of the previous Head Magistrate, the late Ujina Zurin. During her youth, she could observe how the limited but efficient criminal organizations operating in the city were giving her father lots of trouble. Discrete and selective in their trade, the otokodate never touched petty crimes such as robbery, nor high profile ones, such as assassinations. Instead, they focused their activities on the gambling, prostitution and opium traffic occurring in Akamori district, supplementing it with a the blackmailing of a few influential samurai customers, ensuring protection for themselves from the higher levels of the justice system. It seemed that the criminals' stranglehold in Akamori was immovable, as proven in the most dramatic manner when her father, becoming too much of a hindrance, died under mysterious circumstances.

The young Mariko, fresh from her gempukku, disappeared shortly thereafter. A few months later, disguised as a young peasant boy, she infiltrated the criminal organization running Akamori's underworld. Within a year she had identified all the leaders and proceeded to poison them all. Only then she revealed her true identity and announced she had avenged her father. But she would not stop at this victory. Mariko knew the leaders would be soon replaced and the operations were only temporarily disrupted. In a bold move, she offered the surviving criminals to work for her, while she simultaneously returned home and joined the city's magistrates. Her reasoning was simple: crime would never be eradicated. So instead of wasting time and lives in this battle, it was more logical to control it so that she would be in a position where she could mitigate its worst effects.

Only a few criminals took her offer seriously, but those who did not swear allegiance to her soon faced the blades of her fellow magistrates. In only a couple years, and after surviving a dozen assassination attempts, Akamori's underworld finally submitted and fell under Mariko's control. During the same time, her accomplishments as a magistrate against the criminals of Akamori earned her much fame, as she always had very detailed information to root those who opposed her out. Thus she quickly climbed the ranks to reach the top position of Head Magistrate. She is now the unofficial Oyabun of Hanami Mura, making sure that only those who seek vice will find it, and that Akamori's illegal commerce remains contained there and as inconspicuous and orderly as possible. Mariko is not without honor; she is simply being practical and will take the dishonorable actions that are necessary to preserve the peace in the city.

Only the highest ranking magistrates working for Mariko are aware of the real situation and her involvement in this unsavory business, but whether they agree with the method or not, none have questioned the results and they remain loyal to her. Similarly, only a few criminal leaders know the identity of their boss, and if some of her underlings try to bypass her authority or eliminate her, they are quickly dispatched by Mariko's magistrates. Her duties provide Mariko with the perfect reason to explain her frequent visits to Akamori, but she hides very carefully her connections with the underworld to anyone who would watch. She took advantage of her training at uncovering the truth to better know how to hide her activities, in particular from her fellow Hare.

Mariko's control over the underworld is not absolute: the opium trade still evades her and remains under the control of some Scorpion proxies smuggling opium in Akamori from Ryoko Owari. Confronting them openly would only attract too much attention to this dark side of the district, so the conflict remains a silent war in the shadows. To make things more difficult, a few high-status samurai of other clans are also involved at different levels in the very lucrative Akamori district. Most have a legal presence as merchant patrons or property owners, but a few have less legal businesses. Ginsei is aware that Mariko must do some distasteful things to maintain peace, and cares more about the results than the means, though he purposely never asks details about her methods. If he knew the whole truth, he would certainly not be pleased. What kind of action he would take is unclear, however, as Mariko is his secret lover. A complicated life indeed...

Ujina Mariko

Insight Rank 4 (Ujina Skirmisher 1/Hare Shadowbane 1/Usagi Bushi 2) - Insight: 213

Air: 3	**Earth: 2**	**Fire: 4**	**Water: 2**	**Void: 3**
Reflexes: 4	Willpower: 3		Perception: 4	
Honor: 2.2		**Glory: 1.8**		**Status: 4.5**

Skills: Acting (Disguise, Mimicry) 3, Athletics 3, Calligraphy (Hare Clan Cipher, Hanami Mura Underworld Cipher) 3, Commerce 2, Courtier 1, Deceit 5, Defense 5, Etiquette (Sincerity) 3, Forgery 2, Hunting 2, Investigation (Interrogation, Search, Notice) 5, Kenjutsu 5, Knives 3, Lore: Heraldry 1, Lore: Law 4, Medicine 2, Sleight of Hand 1, Spellcraft (Maho) 1, Stealth 5 (Shadowing, Sneaking), Underworld 5.

Advantages: Allies (Usagi Ginsei, Inf. 2/Dev. 4), Bland, Clear Thinker, Daikoku's Blessing, Heartless, Leadership, Perceived Honor (4 Points).

Disadvantages: Driven (Control Hanami Mura Underworld), Overconfident, Sworn Enemy (Scorpion Ringleader of the Opium Trade).

Usagi Hotsuken

Usagi Hotsuken, the Captain of the Guard, is an honorable warrior and skilled tactician, but he feels his talents are wasted on this assignment that brings him much glory but keeps him away from the action. One example of the long friendship between the Hare and the Lion, he was trained at the prestigious Akodo War College thanks to a favor a Lion lord owed to his father. From his years among the Lion, he also adopted their disdain of frivolities such as art for the sake of art and other similar courtly games. Hotsuken is smart enough to know his limitations, and thus he avoids the courts of Hanami Mura as much as he can, preferring instead to spend time training his men or managing his small garrison in the most efficient way possible.

There are some tensions with Ujina Mariko occasionally, as he and his troops, due to the lack of true military action, sometimes take upon themselves to act in stead of the city magistrates rather than reporting the trouble they encounter. More often than not, Hotsuken's interventions disrupt Mariko's carefully laid plans.

To keep his men busy, he often organizes expeditions in the Shinomen. These patrols are another potential source of conflicts, as the Unicorn defending the Shinomen object to the Hare's presence. Hotsuken claims that he is hunting bandit groups operating from the forest, but he also suspects Scorpion activity and tries to dismantle smuggling operations. Hotsuken's intentions are honorable and his record exemplary, which explains why Ginsei always dismisses Mariko's suggestions to reassign him elsewhere, wishing to keep that competent officer with him.

Usagi Hotsuken

Insight Rank 3 (Akodo War College 3) - Insight: 185

Air: 2	**Earth: 3**	**Fire: 2**	**Water: 3**	**Void: 3**
Reflexes: 4		Agility: 4		
Honor: 4.0		**Glory: 2.5**		**Status: 4.5**

Skills: Athletics 3, Battle (Mass Combat) 5, Courtier 1, Defense 5, Etiquette 1, Games (Go) 2, Horsemanship 2, Hunting 3, Investigation (Notice) 2, Jiujutsu 3, Kenjutsu 5, Kyujutsu 5, Lore: Heraldry 1, Lore: History 2, Medicine 2 (Wound Treatment), Meditation 2, War Fans 3.
Advantages: Balance, Bishamon's Blessing, Combat Reflexes, Different School, Heartless, Irreproachable, Large, Leadership, Tactician.
Disadvantages: Brash, Meddler, Overconfident.

Mike Brodu

Jouba Ikke, Hanami Mura's Stables

The Hanami Mura stables were built in the mid-10th century when the popularity of the unique blossoms of the city spread across the empire. Devout samurai came in droves to pray at the temples and meditate in the holy areas of the city; each one of them needed a place to stay and a place to keep their horses. To solve this problem, the Hare clan built the Haven Inn and the Jouba Ikke stables. Ownership of the stables has passed through many hands over the centuries and, they have been rebuilt at least twice. The current caretaker of the stables is Usagi Nobu, a retired Hare clan magistrate.

Nobu has called Hanami Mura home since 1153, when he was stationed there after his gempukku. He served admirably, a dutiful magistrate, until the Rain of Blood. Then, the magistrates of the city were called upon to deal with those affected by the vile influence of the Rain. Nobu was forced to kill his best friend and fellow magistrate Usagi Katsu, who was entranced by Iuchiban's horrible spell and killed his own wife. The death of Katsu and his wife left their only son, Sachi, an orphan, and Nobu's guilt left him an empty shell of a man. He took over the Jouba Ikke, abandoned his magistrate career, and eventually adopted his friend's young son.

Desperately needing to put the past behind him, he threw himself into his new duty. Over the years, he remodeled the building, making it bigger and more efficient. He moved living quarters to the second floor, increasing the number of stalls below. Nobu also moved the stalls to the outer walls, which created an open area in the center where the customers would ride in, and where servants would tend to their horses. The front of the building is wide open, allowing the servants to easily lead the animals in and out in order to give them their daily exercise. From time to time, Nobu and Sachi will ride outside the city to allow the animals to graze in the lush countryside. Nobu uses these outings as an opportunity to teach Sachi the ways of a samurai. When not allowing the animals to graze or teaching kenjutsu to Sachi, Nobu is usually engaged in teaching Sachi the ways of the stables—showing him the intricacies of handling horses,

riding them, and otherwise running the business. While they are away, their two servants Aki and Kana can run the business very efficiently.

Usagi Nobu

Nobu is an old man, ready for his retirement, but waiting until Sachi is ready to take over before shaving his head. His graying hair is kept quite short, and he dresses in plain, but functional, clothes. His voice is deep and rumbling, but his generally quiet demeanor betrays his shyness. Nobu's overall ambition is to drift off into obscurity. He still blames himself for killing Sachi's father, and wants the world to forget about his darkest past deed. The guilt plagues him so deeply that he cannot bring himself to realize that no one remembers that day—not even Sachi.

Usagi Nobu

Insight Rank 4 (Usagi Bushi 4) - Insight: 201

Air: 3	**Earth: 3**	**Fire: 4**	**Water: 3**	**Void: 3**
Honor: 1.5		**Glory: 2.0**		**Status: 1.5**

Skills: Animal Handling (Horses) 5, Athletics (Running) 2, Defense 3, Horsemanship 5, Hunting 3, Instruction (Animal Handling) 2, Investigation 3, Jiujitsu 3, Kenjutsu 3, Lore: Kolat 1, Lore: Law 3, Medicine (Animals) 3, Spellcraft (Maho) 1
Advantages: Way of the Land (Hanami Mura)
Disadvantages: Antisocial (2 Points), Lost Friend (mechanically identical to Lost Love), Old, Dependent (1 Point)

Usagi Sachi

Fresh from his gempukku, Sachi is sixteen years old. He almost idolizes his adoptive father, dressing and grooming just like him. The two seem to be older and younger versions of the same man on the surface, but there are obvious differences as you look deeper. Sachi, for example, is an excitable young man who talks loudly and often. He will talk to anyone willing to show him the courtesy to listen. The other big difference between the two is that Sachi is a coward afraid of physical confrontation, while Nobu lacks the courage to accept his past and leave his regrets behind. Sachi will back down from almost any fight in which he feels he is outmatched. He would much rather exhibit his athleticism and run.

Usagi Sachi

Insight Rank 1 (Usagi Bushi 1) - Insight: 134

Air: 3	**Earth: 2**	**Fire: 3**	**Water: 2**	**Void: 2**
Honor: 1.5		**Glory: 1.0**		**Status: 1.0**

Skills: Animal Handling (Horses) 2, Athletics (Running) 3, Defense 1, Horsemanship 1, Hunting 1, Jiujutsu 2, Kenjutsu 2, Lore: Kolat 1, Spellcraft (Maho) 1
Advantages: Daredevil
Disadvantages: Small, Coward (6 Points)

Aki and Kana

Aki and Kana are a brother and sister pair of heimin hired by Nobu when he first took over the Jouba Ikke. They are valued members of his staff, and the hardest working persons with whom he has ever had the pleasure of dealing. Almost the same age and each in their early thirties, one would assume they would at least bear some resemblance to each other, but instead they are mirror opposites. While Aki is a small and seemingly delicate girl, her brother is as large as a Hida and just as strong and muscled. Kana is a simple man with a simple mind, but his sister is sharp and cunning. Clients should never let her catch them trying to cheat her, because if they try she will know and if she knows... so does Kana. These two are the real reason for the Jouba Ikke's continuous success, as they spend more time managing the business than Nobu and Sachi, who are often away learning from one another.

Akodo Harubi

Yodosuke's Arrival

Early spring, just after the winter thaws....

Two horses struggle along the roadway, their hooves sinking into the wet mud. The leading rider raises a meaty hand to his brow and stares over the sprawl of newly planted rice paddies. The setting sun illuminates his clothing—which seems of very high quality—the well-bred form of his horse and the clay bottle in his hand. The warm spring day has his forehead glistening with sweat. Reaching into his obi, the man pulls out a scrap of fabric and mops his face. Then his lips part in a wide smile and he turns to the man riding behind him.

"I tell you, Sato, this trip gets longer and longer each time we take it. Sometimes I think that the Fortunes are moving Zakyo Toshi away, little by little, and laughing all the while." Pulling the stopper from the clay bottle he takes a long drink, drizzling the last few drops over his lips. "And there goes what's left of last year's sake. I hope that Yoshi got our rooms settled and ready for us at Haven. I'm looking forward to some of their famous okonomiyaki and a glass or two of this year's Three Kami sake... not to mention a night's rest away from Lady Moon's careful watch."

"Yoshi is a capable man, -sama. I'm certain he took care of all the preparations." The servant brushes dirt from his kimono and rolls up the map he was studying. "We should arrive at Hanami Mura within the hour, Yodosuke-sama."

Yodosuke nods. "And not a moment too soon."

The remainder of the trip passes in silence.

The next day....

Most of the important members of the clans are busy enough to easily stay away from the general populace. Ikoma Yodosuke however, is not a typical samurai. He enjoys his fame and takes every opportunity to cultivate it. The people of Hanami Mura are used to having someone of Yodosuke's stature in their town, but still, some are still taken by his presence, fondly remembering his previous visits and legendary largesse.

"Yodosuke-san!" "Yodosuke-san!" "Ikoma-sama!" A crowd of fans presses around, many offering him gifts or seeking a memento of the meeting. Most are peasant merchants or artisans, but a few samurai also join the crowd.

"Good morning, everyone!" Yodosuke smiles and spreads his arms wide, his jade-green kimono taut over his belly. He waves and laughs. "Thank you so much for welcoming me to your wonderful city. I wish I could spend the day with all of you, my dear friends, but I do have duties to attend to this day. Places to go and people to see, a samurai's duty is never done!" He waves and laughs again, his other hand waving a fan toward his face. He begins to politely push his way through the crowd.

Sato follows close behind his master, handing out small cards of thin wood decorated with Yodosuke's personal mon and his name in elegant calligraphy. A second servant, Yoshi, gathers the improvised gifts meant for his master: fruits, fishballs on a stick, mochi, but also small sculptures or paintings. "Yodosuke-sama wishes he could thank you each personally for your kind gifts. Know that he is deeply grateful." Yoshi bows deeply and pushes along after his master. The crowd calls out after Yodosuke and his entourage, cheering and shouting his name as he disappears down the street.

Finally free of the crowd, Yodosuke begins giving instructions regarding the coming day's activities to his two servants. However, a large man covered in tattoos suddenly appears in front of him, interrupting his words.

"Yodosuke-sama," the tattooed man says, "I had heard you were in town." Although he is plain of face, with a shaved head, bare feet and simple clothes, nearly every visible inch of his skin is covered in colorful designs. The monk's demeanor is friendly and calm.

"How could you not?" Yodosuke replies, glancing back at his crowd of admirers. He chuckles and bows to the tattooed man. "Konnichi-wa Natsune-san. Yes, I am a bit early this year. I received a letter from the brewmaster Jousei. He says that this year's winter bottling is his best ever. If I am to be at all respected, I must, of course, be able to provide my guests the best of the best."

"Of course. 'The price of greatness is paid by the great, but we all reap the benefits.' Yoshi understands, I'm sure." Yodosuke's servant nods silently.

"The wisdom of Shinsei knows no borders, old friend. You always find the best things to say. And how does the day find you?" Yodosuke leads his friend in the direction he was heading, Yoshi and Sato close behind.

"I am well, Yodosuke-san. Your commissions are nearly finished, and I must say, they are some of my best work. What a lucky person to receive the gifts you give."

"But, my pious friend, as any Doji will tell you, the wisdom of the gift is best expressed by Shinsei himself. I believe the saying is 'A gift is given for the purpose of receiving one'."

"I am humbled. Certainly this proves that even a monk can learn theology in the strangest of places."

The two of them laugh and then talk of old times, followed by sharing the tales of their recent winters. Yodosuke passes along tidbits of information he has

gathered while wintering at Shiro Sano Kakita. Soon, they find themselves before Togashi Natsune's storefront.

"Oh, look where we find ourselves, Natsune-san. If you have time, perhaps you could send my items over to Haven later today? Yoshi will ensure the items find their way safely. I have to see Jousei now, before my bottles are sold! Sayonara, Natsune-san...I hope you will be at dinner, I'd love to tell you the story of my close friend Matsu Kiyohara. Such a remarkable young man... can you believe he had the audacity to make it through the entirety of the Tournament of Thunder without drinking a single drop of sake? You can be certain that the Fortune of Thunder was none too happy with that!" Yodosuke bows and takes his leave, walking with Sato toward the edge of town and the famed Three Kami sake works. Natsune smiles.

"I like his enthusiasm for his work," he says to Yoshi. "There are others who would find some of his actions boorish and impolite, but I find them refreshing. Life is not as serious as these others like to make it. Shinsei tells us that nothing offends anger more than laughter, so I believe that Yodosuke offends a great many angry individuals. Still, it would not take long for him to win them back, I would think."

"You are a wise man, Togashi-sama," Yoshi says, "enlightened to the ways of the world."

"If only that were true. Unfortunately for us all, enlightenment is not so easily attained. But now our talk turns alarmingly spiritual. Let us finish your master's commission so that you may be about your duties." The monk turns and walks into his shop.

"As you wish, Togashi-sama," Yoshi says, following.

Evening, Haven dining room....

"I am so glad that everyone found the time to join me tonight," Yososuke says. "I have arranged with the excellent staff of the Haven inn to prepare a meal you will, no doubt, find intriguing. I took the liberty of pairing each course with matching sake, leaving our beloved Three Kami for last." He claps his hands together and waves his servants forward. "Please accept these gifts as a token of my appreciation." He sits, adjusting his elegant gold kimono and fanning his glistening face.

Yoshi and Sato rush forward and set chopstick boxes in front of each guest. Each is beautifully lacquered and brushed with the recipient's name in delicate calligraphy. The boxes, and the chopsticks inside, are exquisitely carved in a manner and a type of wood intended to reflect the recipient in some way. Once each guest has had the opportunity to receive and admire their gift, Yodosuke stands once again.

"Now, please, let us not worry ourselves with formalities. We are friends, and these are simple gifts. Let us instead enjoy each other's company." He punctuates his statement by raising, and then downing a full cup of sake. "Kampai!"

"Kampai!" The others follow suit with their own beverages.

"The first course is a very delicate pairing of local freshwater mussels and early spring onions. I believe you will quickly see how well it complements the crisp and clean flavors of the Inari's Blessing sake I have chosen as its companion." Servants stream out of the kitchens and place a dish before each guest.

The meal continues in this way for many hours, the guests talking excitedly and clearly enjoying themselves. Yodosuke makes the rounds, speaking to Ujina Mariko, Hanami Mura's chief magistrate, and Fuzake Mugen, the Monkey Clan's representative, at length about several topics. He also makes sure to speak, for at least a moment, to Kasuga Jinshu of the Tortoise and Morito Fang-Chuo of the Ox. By the end of the evening, Yodosuke has drunk his fill and made a number of new "friends". He has also set up meetings with most of the city dignitaries before they leave for the evening. He thanks the staff and returns to his rooms with Sato and Yoshi supporting him.

"I have an appointment with the Governor in the morning, make sure I am ready. We have his gift, do we not, Yoshi?"

"Yes,- sama, it is in your trunk."

"Perfect. I am certain he will love the carving knives. The Shiba said they are the best he has ever made, and would be the prized possession of any woodcarver. I can only hope the Governor appreciates them. I'll need that if I am to get him to agree to my deal." He heaves a great sigh as his servants lower him to his futon. "And what about the last gift?"

"It is here, -sama." Sato places a bundle wrapped in colorful silk in Yodosuke's hands. He unwraps the silk to reveal a go-board with lions carved into the borders, and two stone bowls. The bowls contain hand-carved go-stones, each featuring the mon of the Seven Black Stones dojo.

"I couldn't be more pleased. Kiyohara-san will love it, certainly. Nothing is too good for my close friend. Make sure to send Natsune an appropriate thank you and something in appreciation for his efforts. He is a fine samurai... monk... man..." He continues mumbling as he drifts off to sleep.

Akodo Harubi

Hanami Mura Downtown

0 100 feet
0 40 meters
A - Governor's Residence
B - Garrison
C - Hana Bengosha Shudoin
D - Haven Inn
E - Shrine to the Heroic Samurai
F - Small Shrine to Inari
G - Chirping Cricket Inn
H - Morning Dew Inn
I - Main Marketplace
J - Main Art Market
K - Docks & Warehouses
L - Tsi Toredo's Forge & Residence
M - Bath House
N - Jouba Ikke Stables
O - Three Kami Sake Works
P - Magistrates Headquarters

❖ Post-Scriptum ❖

So, What's Next?

Oh well, I'm not going to make any promises about the next issue's release date. Musha Shugyo #4 will be out when it is out...

Next issue's theme is going to be the Shadowlands and the Spider Clan. Expect all kind of scary monsters and things that go bump in the dark.

Participation to our contests has been quite spotty. As a result, we have decided to discontinue this feature. We'll find ways for people to participate, though, just like we did for this issue when we asked for volunteer writers on specific topics.

Don't forget that we have our magnificent website at www.musha-shugyo.com, and check it out from time to time for updates on the next issue.

See you in a few months! (or a year! But hopefully, a few months...)

Mike Brodu

Musha Shugyo